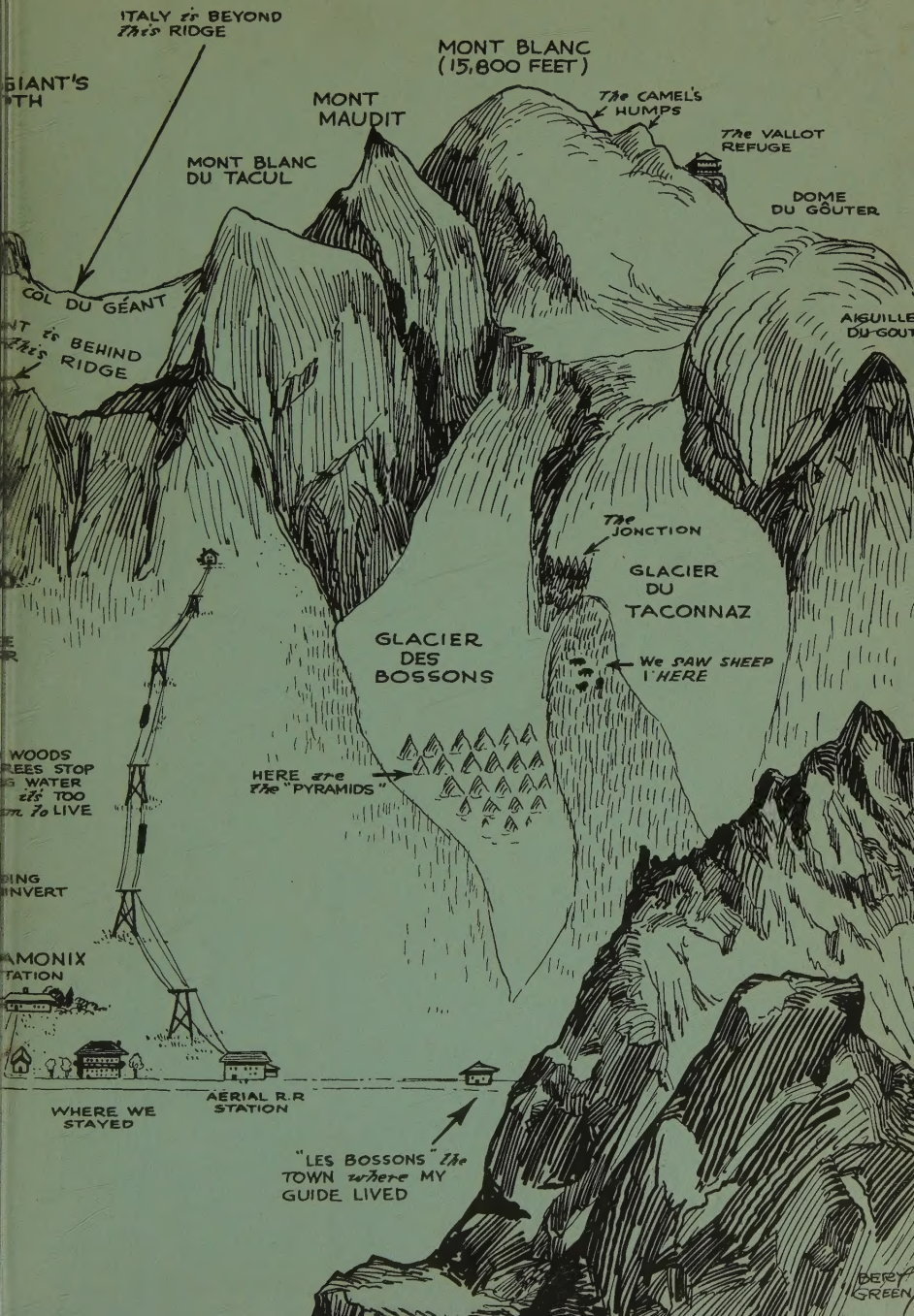


AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

BRADFORD WASHBURN



ITALY IS BEYOND
THIS RIDGE

MONT BLANC
(15,800 FEET)

MONT
MAUDIT

THE CAMEL'S
HUMPS

THE VALLOT
REFUGE

HOME
DU GOUTER

AIGUILLE
DU-GOUT

MONT BLANC
DU TACUL

COL DU GÉANT

ITALY IS BEYOND
THIS RIDGE

THE
JUNCTION

GLACIER
DU
TACONNAZ

GLACIER
DES
BOSSONS

WE SAW SHEEP
I'HERE

HERE ARE
THE "PYRAMIDS"

WOODS
TREES STOP
AS WATER
IS TOO
COLD TO LIVE

CLIMBING
INVERT

AMONIX
STATION

WHERE WE
STAYED

AERIAL R.R.
STATION

"LES BOSSONS" THE
TOWN WHERE MY
GUIDE LIVED

BERRY
GREEN

BY DAVID BINNEY PUTNAM

DAVID GOES VOYAGING
DAVID GOES TO GREENLAND
DAVID GOES TO BAFFIN LAND

BY DERIC NUSBAUM

DERIC IN MESA VERDE
DERIC WITH THE INDIANS

BY ROBERT CARVER NORTH

BOB NORTH STARTS EXPLORING

BY BRADFORD WASHBURN

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

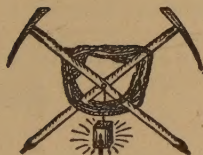


Ten Thousand Feet up on Mont Blanc.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

BY
BRADFORD WASHBURN

WITH A FOREWORD BY
HIS BROTHER



ILLUSTRATED WITH SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR AND PHOTO-
GRAPHS TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR, HIS BROTHER, GEORGES
TAIRRAZ OF CHAMONIX, AND ALFRED COUTTET, THE
SKI CHAMPION OF FRANCE

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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The Knickerbocker Press

1927

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD



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by

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Published October, 1927

8 This is a copy of the First Edition

G. P. Putnam's Sons



Made in the United States of America

THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED TO
MY GUIDES
ALFRED COUTTET, GEORGES CHARLET
AND
ANTOINE RAVANEL
WITHOUT WHOM NEITHER IT
NOR I SHOULD
EXIST



FOREWORD

FOR several years both summer and winter have found Brad climbing in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. In fact about a year ago he wrote a guide book to the Presidential Range. He has always been an enthusiastic climber, as some dozens of peaks in the White Mountains will bear witness. He has climbed one of them over twenty times. His big chance came last summer. We went abroad and spent two weeks at Chamonix, a great climbing center in the very heart of the French Alps.

After climbing a couple of small peaks he was seen by father and mother, watching through a telescope in the valley, as he reached the summit of Mont Blanc, the highest of the

FOREWORD

Alps. During the next week which was spent at Zermatt, Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn fell before his conquering boots.

This year Brad has devoted himself to the most difficult rock climbs among the Aiguilles of Chamonix. He has made several first and second ascents, and one peak may be named after him.

This summer my brother became a member of the Groupe de Haute Montagne of the French Alpine Club. This is one of the finest Alpine clubs that there is, because, unlike the regular French Alpine Club, one has to climb a certain number of the most difficult peaks before one can become a member. To the best of my belief there are only two members of this Groupe in America at present. The other is a woman.

You can hire a guide who will pull you up any difficult places there happen to be on a mountain, but Brad usually gets up by himself. He agrees with those who believe that

FOREWORD

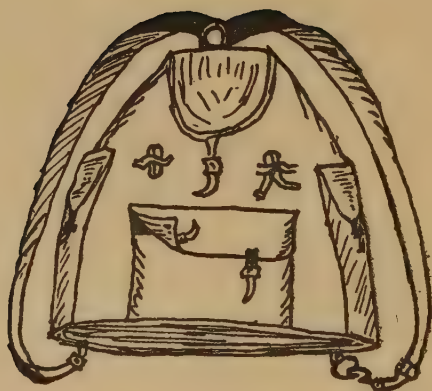
mountain climbing is a test of sportsmanship, and feels that if he can't climb the difficult places without being pulled he really hasn't climbed the mountain.

People from every nation of the world flock to the Alps, both to see the mountains and to climb. The motley crowd that one meets in the huts is made up of the best spirit from every country.

SHERWOOD L. WASHBURN.

ON BOARD S.S. *Colombo*,
GRAND BANKS OF NEWFOUNDLAND.
September 18, 1927.







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AMONG THE ALPS WITH
BRADFORD





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"Something hidden—Go and find it!
Go and look behind the Ranges—
Something lost behind the Ranges,
Lost and waiting for you. Go!"

—Rudyard Kipling.



CHAPTER I

CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC

IT was on a late July afternoon of 1926 that I got my first view of the Alps. While I was standing on the flying field at Lyons in France I thought that I saw a number of billowing white clouds far off on the eastern horizon. But, as they never seemed to move or change a bit, I decided that they must be the peaks of the distant Alps.

Before long father and I and another man got into a tiny aeroplane just big enough for three people and a pilot, and we began the most wonderful ride that I have ever

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

taken. The machine taxied slowly across the field till we were well over into a far corner. Then it turned sharply, and the motor opened up to full speed with a roar.

We sped across the field like lightning, bumping very heavily at first, then more and more lightly, until, with a little leap, the plane left the ground and soared into the air. It was rather a scary start, especially as we missed the gable of the aerodrome's roof by about ten feet!

Once in the air we didn't go forward at all for nearly ten minutes, but merely circled slowly upwards to gain height. We were going to cross a range of mountains, and the pilot didn't want to have to circle for height in the bad air currents near them. When we were about five thousand feet above the aerodrome, we swung around towards the north-east and began to fly straight ahead at nearly a hundred miles an hour.

I could see people working in the fields like

CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC

tiny, black flies way down below. Even the fields themselves took on a queer air. They all seemed to be so neatly arranged and fitted one to the other. The rivers, too, were different. They had a winding look that one does not ever see from the level.

A blue range of mountains now rose ahead of us with a river flowing at its feet. These were the Jura mountains of which Cæsar speaks so often. Now I could see very clearly why the pilot had circled so high before leaving Lyons. Even at the height at which we were we barely missed the top of the ridge as the plane passed over it. In fact we were so near that we could see the trees and foliage clearly.

The moment that we crossed that ridge the view began. As if by magic, the whole horizon, which had been hidden from view by the Juras, opened up into a sea of snowy peaks. And there, far off to the right, rose the glittering snow-capped peak of Mont

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

Blanc, a whole head higher than everything else. It certainly was the highest peak in Europe and it looked it too. It was a regular old monarch looking down on all his tiny subjects with a very cold and icy air!

I was so held by the grandeur of the group of mountains right around Mont Blanc that I hardly had time to see anything else. There was Lake Geneva, lying peacefully like a great greenish-blue gem, nestled down among the hills directly below us. And far away in the distance the spires of some mighty snow peaks towered into the blue sky.

I scarcely had time to glance about me before the airplane ducked frightfully to the left and brought us down five thousand feet to the Geneva aerodrome in three great circling swoops. It was all over in such a hurry that I could hardly realize that we were in the valley once more and that no snow-covered Alps were in sight.

The airplane in which mother and Sherry

CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC

(that is what I call my brother) were in came down out of the sky in a couple of minutes. The flight was over and the family together again. Neither of the airplanes had fallen and none of us were killed! We did learn later that the planes in which we had flown were owned and operated by a company which was supposed to be the worst in Europe. They were machines that had been used by the French government during the World War, and they were all ready to fall to bits!

We had to go through a short customs at the aerodrome because Geneva is in Switzerland and Lyons in France. However, none of our bags were disturbed at all and in a very few minutes we got into an auto which took us to the city of Geneva, about a mile away. There we had supper looking out over the lake, on the other side of which Mont Blanc was in plain sight.

Before supper, father had asked for a car to be ready at seven o'clock to take us in to

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

Chamonix. When we were all through eating we stepped out onto the porch, and there it was. It was a big Cadillac; but I have never seen such a motorcar in all my life. It was no *ordinary* Cadillac. The hood over the engine was all nickel-plated, and the whole affair shone like the sun.

The baggage had all been strapped on behind, and we piled in. The chauffeur finished his work of shining up the hood and climbed in beside me. Then we started the second great experience of the day.

The town of Chamonix-Mont-Blanc is about sixty miles from Geneva by the auto road. And every one of those sixty miles is a beautiful one. Besides, we had struck the very best time of day to take the drive. It was just after seven in the evening when we set off, and in that way we had the evening lights and sunset almost all the way up the valleys leading to Chamonix.

The first part of the drive, although it was

CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC

through beautiful country, was along the level, across a sort of plain. We soon went through the customs—this time going back into France again. In going to Geneva we had just crossed a little strip of Switzerland.

Before long the plain began to turn into a valley, and the fields on both sides of us got steeper and steeper. An hour out of Geneva still another change took place. The hills with fields on their sides grew much taller, and became mountains with great cliffs on their sides.

A roaring stream filled with water to the very banks swirled beside us part of the way—this was the Arve, a river which flows into the Rhone, and finds its source in the glaciers of the Mont Blanc range.

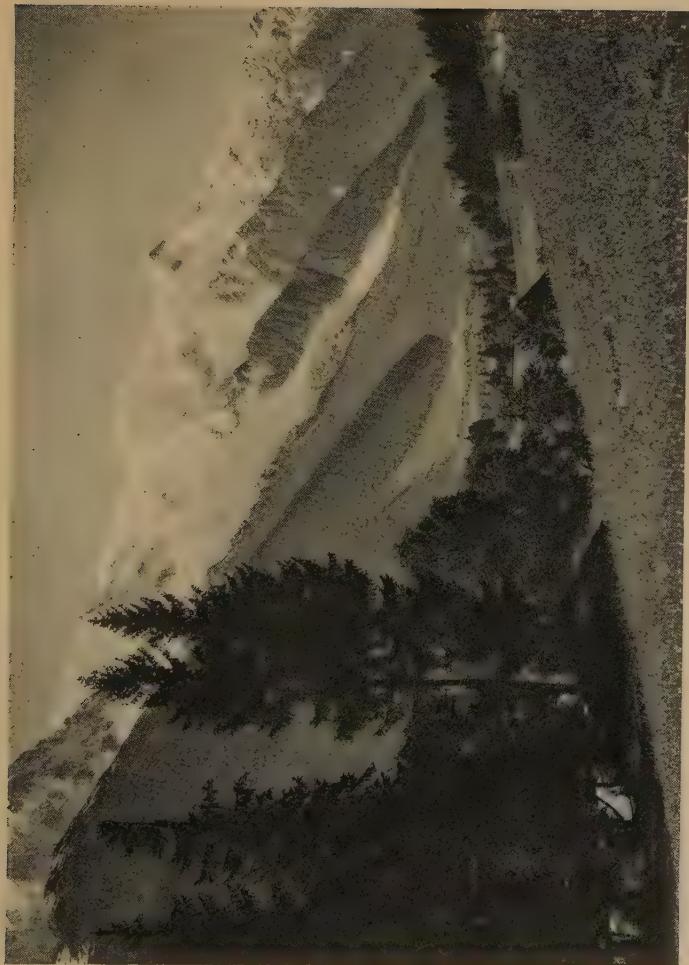
Still further on snow mountains appeared to the left. We were now going through towns that I thought I remembered having read about in books on Mont Blanc: St. Gervais, where a railway starts that runs eight

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

thousand feet up the slopes of Mont Blanc; and Servoz, where the Arve races through a group of marvellous gorges.

Night was now falling. When we passed out of St. Gervais on the way to Servoz it was really quite dark, except for the moon which was rising over the mountains. The road began to have a truly alpine aspect. It looked like the pictures that you see in books. It was hewn out of the solid rock of a vertical cliff, the massive wall of rock rising up above us into the moonlight. Another sheer drop on the left led down into the valley, ever getting farther away below us.

We swung up to the right of the gorges, and passed Servoz with its dozens of tiny, sparkling lights far down in the darkness. Now we passed through a deep notch through the mountains. Then with a sharp swing to the left, we crossed over the Arve, on a bridge high over the gorge, and entered the valley of Chamonix.



Mont Blanc and the Valley of Chamonix.



Alfred Couttet and His Little Chalet.

CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC

I recognized it in a second from the pictures that I had seen, even though it was dark. There on the right, sparkling in the moonlight were the steep snowy slopes of the Aiguille du Goûter which run straight to the summit of Mont Blanc. That giant was hidden from view behind the Aiguille but we would be able to see it in a few minutes.

The moonlight was gorgeous beyond words. The fine spires of the rocky Aiguilles, or Needles, just to the left of Mont Blanc would be lit up as clear as day every now and then. In a moment they would disappear into the blackness, as the moon ducked out of sight behind a cloud. Those pinnacles are the most wonderful rock climbs on the face of the earth.

The clouds themselves were quite a show, playing hide-and-seek with the moon amongst those icy crags, ever whipped on at furious speed by a roaring gale of wind. It looked cold up there, frightfully cold!

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

The whole way from the beginning of the valley to Chamonix we had that wonderful sight. All was dark except for the little chalets (French mountain houses) perched along the slopes near the road. Once I even fancied that I saw a light (I really did) far up on the slopes of one of the large mountains. It was the little Chalet du Plan de l'Aiguille where we went before doing many of our climbs. I was destined to spend many nights under its roof during the summer.

Soon the lights of Chamonix sprang up before us, and in a moment we were in the crowded streets of the little village. It's almost entirely made up of hotels and shops, while the houses of the mountain guides and country people are grouped in tiny little villages that form a suburb, like a ring, all around the main town.

The driver skillfully piloted the car through the pleasure-seeking crowds, which always fill the streets in the evening, and brought us

CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC

at last to the door of our little hotel—the Astoria.

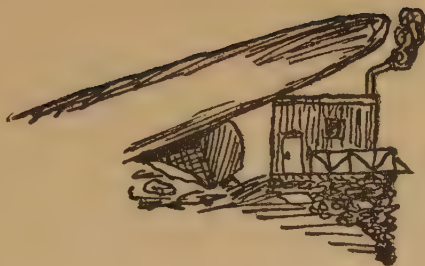
Father paid him off after a friendly argument over the comparative values of Swiss and French money. You see, since the driver came from Geneva, he wanted to get paid in Swiss money. We were then in France, and Dad had already got all his Swiss money changed into French, so they had quite a time. At last it was all settled, and the great car rolled ponderously off towards Geneva. I went for my room at full speed. I was tired and wanted to go to bed, as the next day promised to be an exciting one.

I could see Mont Blanc very clearly from my window now, as there was no Aiguille du Goûter to bar the view. The night was so beautiful outside that I just couldn't get to bed, but at last I managed to wrench myself from the window, and sleep took me in hand in a hurry.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

My dream had at last come true. I was in Chamonix—and there was Mont Blanc to prove it!





CHAPTER II

THE EARLY CLIMBERS

BETWEEN our hotel and the rushing little stream of the Arve, which flows through the very middle of Chamonix, is a little square. This is the spot on which stands the famous monument to Balmat and de Saussure, the two men who had most to do with the conquest of Mont Blanc.

The story of their many attempts, failures and final success is one of the most interesting of all those in Alpine history.

In 1700 the little settlement among the mountains, which is now called Chamonix,

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

was made up of only a very few houses. Most of these belonged to the crystal-cutters who worked their trade far back among the mountains of the Mont Blanc range, in a place that is now called the "Col des Cristaux." To get to their crystals they went up the great river of ice known as the "Mer de Glace," then turning to the left they crossed another huge glacier, the Glacier de Talèfre, and on the Jardin de Talèfre, a little island of rock and dirt in the midst of these vast glaciers, they made their camp. Here they worked during the summer months, coming back to the valley every now and then to bring the crystals they had cut. In the winter their life was dreary. They had little to do but polish their crystals and at the crack of spring bring them to Geneva where they were sold.

In those days nobody was interested in climbing the mountains for anything at all but his daily work. The peaks about Chamonix were thought to be the homes of great

THE EARLY CLIMBERS

giants who would kill anybody if he tried to penetrate them. Once a man made an attempt to climb one of the mountains, but an avalanche of rock killed him, while he was returning. For years after that time people were afraid of the mountains and left them entirely alone.

But in the vicinity of 1750 a young foreigner came to Geneva and heard from the crystal-cutters of the Mer de Glace. They told him that it was a frozen river, with waves of ice, and caverns so deep that their bottoms were invisible. The young man got so interested in the tales of these crystal-cutters, that he hired one of them to take him to Chamonix and show him the marvellous sight.

There was no road from Geneva to Chamonix in those days. And when the foreigner started out with the crystal men, the people of Geneva thought that he was crazy to take such a long and dangerous journey. The old trail followed the route of the road that is

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

there nowadays, so it was no little walk all the way between the two places.

The young man, however, was well guided by the crystal-seekers, and they brought him safely to the Mer de Glace. He walked out onto the ice, but was so scared by the crevasses and caverns in it that he spent only a half hour there, and started back to Geneva the next day.

He was the first man to visit the mountains for his own pleasure. When he returned to Geneva, he stirred up the people there with his wildly exaggerated stories. And before long lots of them were making the journey to see the wonders of the Mer de Glace.

Above all the others, a young Genevan, called Horace Benedict de Saussure, was interested in this great icefield.

With a number of friends he visited it a few times, and then his interest began to reach still further. He explored the Glacier de Talèfre where the crystal-seekers worked.

THE EARLY CLIMBERS

However, he was still not satisfied, and instead of turning to the left from the Mer de Glace, as you do to go to the Glacier de Talèfre, he turned to the right. By doing this he followed another route of the crystal men, up the Glacier du Géant (the Giant's Glacier), the largest icefield in the Mont Blanc chain.

Before long de Saussure knew the ground about Chamonix far better than even the crystal-seekers. He was not only interested in the mountains themselves, but in their very formation. He was one of the greatest geologists of the century.

In 1760, de Saussure offered a large sum of money to anyone who could find a way for him by which Mont Blanc could be climbed. All the crystal-seekers gave up their work and went daily in attempts to climb the monarch of the Alps. And they were so eager to get there before their comrades, that they fairly stumbled over each other to be the first.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

It was a long time, however, before any of these men succeeded in their work. One by one they gave up and returned to their crystal-cutting. They were evidently trying to climb the great peak from the wrong side. Naturally they were endeavoring to make the climb from the Glacier du Géant, because they had hunted crystals there, and knew the region well. But the great icy slopes and cliffs on this side of the mountain were too much for them, and finally they all gave up.

One man *did* stick to the job he had begun. This was Jacques Balmat, a young crystal-hunter, who had been born in Chamonix. He saw the mistake that his friends had made. *He* tried to climb the mountain directly up the slope that faces Chamonix.

The woods were very dense up the first part of the mountain, making the climbing tedious. But when he got above eight thousand feet (about five thousand feet above Chamonix), he found the going quite easy.

THE EARLY CLIMBERS

The glaciers on this side were not so badly cut up by crevasses as those on the other side. Besides, they were not nearly so steep.

After three or four tries Balmat succeeded, *all alone*, in reaching the wide, smooth, and almost level snowfield which lies only a thousand feet below the summit of Mont Blanc. This expanse of snow is called the Grand Plateau.

Here he stayed for a few hours and studied the snowy walls which surrounded him on all but one side. He made up his mind that there were three ways to reach the top from the spot where he was. To this very day, the three ways which Balmat discovered are the only ones used for climbing that final pyramid of Mont Blanc from the Chamonix side.

The first way was by the passage now called the Corridor. To climb this, he must turn sharp to the left and gain the ridge which leads straight to the summit of Mont Blanc,

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

by a steep ice slope. He then would have to follow the ridge to the summit.

The second route was to go straight ahead, and right up the face of the mountain. This way, because it lies to the left of a line of red-colored rocks sticking through the snow, is called the Rochers Rouges route.

The third way looked the easiest of the three. It is the one used most often today. To climb it, he could turn to the right and, by an easy snow slope, gain the ridge which connects Mont Blanc with the Dôme du Goûter. The Dôme is a great snowy shoulder just to the right of the final pyramid of Mont Blanc. He would then have to finish the climb by following the crest of this ridge, much the same way as for the Corridor.

The last way, besides being the easiest, looked the safest, because the first two were both made frightfully dangerous by huge pinnacles of ice, which often fell from above the Rochers Rouges.

THE EARLY CLIMBERS

Balmat was satisfied with what he had found. He was dead sure that he had, at last, discovered a way to reach the summit of Mont Blanc. He got safely back to Chamonix, after having spent two days and nights on the mountain entirely alone. And he told no one of his discoveries but the village doctor, Michel-Gabriel Paccard.

The pair started out from Chamonix a couple of days later, on the seventh of August, 1786. Each left the town by himself, in order that no suspicion should be aroused. Besides the two men, the only people who knew of the enterprise were a few inhabitants of the neighboring priory, who were instructed to watch the summit the next day. In this way the two climbers would have some reliable witnesses.

All the first day Balmat and his companion climbed up the lower slopes of the mountain. Sometimes it was easier in the trees, and other times they found the climb-

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

ing made more simple by following the edges of the great Glacier des Bossons. This glacier falls, in one unbroken field of ice, from the very summit of Mont Blanc to the valley.

The first night they bivouacked at the top of the Montagne de la Côte, the tongue of land up which they had climbed all day. You can still see there the big boulder, under which they spent the night. I saw it last summer, when I climbed Mont Blanc.

The next morning, they started at break of day, and climbed up the snowfields and glacier that lay between them and the Grand Plateau. At noon they disappeared over the rim of the plateau, and the telescopes that had been watching them from the valley, lost sight of the two climbers.

The two men, spurred on by the late hour and the nearness of their goal, took the shortest route from the Grand Plateau to the summit—that by the Rochers Rouges.

They found the snow remarkably hard

THE EARLY CLIMBERS

and easy to climb over, and before many hours had passed, they were nearing the summit.

The news that two men were climbing Mont Blanc speedily spread about the village, so the priory was not to be the only witness of what was about to take place.

At twenty-three minutes after six in the evening the telescopes again picked up their prey. But now the men were visible to the naked eye. There they were! Two black dots could be seen silhouetted against the sunset sky—Balmat and Paccard! The whole village fell on their knees in silent tribute to the conquerors of Europe's highest peak.

At the same time that the village prayed, two voices might have been heard. Perched far up in the heavens, Paccard and Balmat knelt side by side on the summit of Mont Blanc to breathe a prayer of thanks for their success. Their voices, as de Saussure later said, broke, for the first time, a silence that had reigned over those masses of ice and

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

snow since the beginning of the world! Mont Blanc was at last conquered!

De Saussure was at once notified of the ascent, and he came at full speed to Chamonix. He made several attempts at the mountain before a week had elapsed, but they were all failures due to bad weather. De Saussure had to wait till the next summer before he could complete the ascent of the mountain. Then he made it a purely scientific expedition, and took Balmat with him as a guide.

From that time on, Mont Blanc was climbed more and more often every year, Balmat alone reaching its summit more than ten times in his life. Towards the end of the last century climbing had turned into a sport.

Whymper and Mummery, perhaps the two most brilliant climbers that have ever lived, stirred up the interest in climbing the "Aiguilles" or "Needles" of rock which lie just to the north of Mont Blanc.



The Wall of Ice that Baffled the Crystal-Seekers.



Alfred Couttet and Bradford Hunting Hunting Rock-Crystals.

THE EARLY CLIMBERS

One after another, the peaks fell before the attack of Mummery, with his two Swiss guides, Burgener and Venetz. Towards the end of the century, when Emile Fontaine, the great French climber, came along, there was nothing left unclimbed but the slender pinnacles which adorn the slopes of the larger Aiguilles so beautifully.

Fontaine set to work (of course it was lots of *fun*) to climb these little pinnacles, most of them less than a hundred feet high. However, the actual height above the sea of most of these little peaks is over ten thousand feet, and some of them are much harder to climb than the big mountains on which they are situated.

Peak after peak gave in to Fontaine as they had in the older days to Mummery and Whymper. Finally, when the Great War was over, the only pinnacles left unclimbed were those which were so difficult and sharp that they had withstood the onset

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

of all three, Whymper, Mummery and Fontaine. A formidable little group!

After the war, what is called the "New School" of guides came into Chamonix. The young men who survived the war, wild with the desire for a rough, out-of-door life, and in wonderful physical condition, took the places of the climbers of Fontaine's day.

The guides whom I had last summer were both of this new group. They were the most sure-footed, agile and strong pair that I have ever seen.

Snow-climbing is not so popular now as it used to be in the old days. The climbing of mountains entirely made of rock seems to be more generally liked. But, as for me, I can't draw a line of preference between the two types of climbing. They're both awfully interesting and I'm writing just about the same amount on each in these pages.



CHAPTER III

THE AERIAL RAILWAY AND PLAN DE L'AIGUILLE

WHEN we were all settled at Chamonix, I began my climbing. The first few trips that I made were very interesting. On one of them we did three peaks that had never been climbed before, and on another we made a climb in search of rock-crystals. The crystal trip was by far the more interesting of the two, but the only trouble was that we weren't able to find many crystals, on account of the fresh fall of snow which covered the mountains.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

Just before the crystal trip, however, I had made a climb among the Aiguilles called the traverse of the Aiguille des Grand Charmoz and the Grépon. The name (I guess!) doesn't mean much to you. But to the climber at Chamonix it is a different matter. The "Charmoz-Grépon Traverse," as it is called by the guides, is one of the best known and most difficult rock climbs in Europe.

Now, on the first climb up the Charmoz and Grépon I had gone with two guides, Alfred Couttet and Georges Charlet, just as on the crystal trip. The ascent was intended to be an expedition almost entirely for pictures. But that climb was a dismal failure. The weather was very poor and dark all the way to the top of the Grépon, and from there to Chamonix it rained!

Besides the weather, however, we had neglected one very important thing. As we were all attached to the same rope, we were too close to take pictures of each other.

THE AERIAL RAILWAY

We returned to Chamonix, a forlorn, be-draggled trio without more than four or five pictures at the most.

That very evening it was decided, in solemn family council, to launch another attack in the near future on the Charmoz and Grépon. The plan was made to take with us a young photographer from Chamonix named Georges Tairraz. Couttet could go with us no longer as he was engaged by another climber. So the party would be made up of Sherry, Tairraz, Georges Charlet, Antoine Ravanel (a guide to take Couttet's place, recommended by Georges), and myself.

The expedition was planned with great care, and we were to start at the very first sign of good weather. Tairraz's pack was all filled and made ready, so we wouldn't lose a moment when the time came. He had with him three cameras—a movie machine, with eight hundred feet of film; a camera to take 5 x 7 inch pictures, with enough film for thirty-

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six of these; and an Eastman panorama camera with enough film for twenty-four panoramas. Besides all this photographic stuff I had my little Graflex, and Sherry had a remarkably good little Eastman vest-pocket camera.

If we struck good weather, we should certainly do the Charmoz and Grépon up brown!

One time we thought we had found good weather, and all started out. But just as we were about to reach the beginning of the difficult part of the Charmoz, it began to rain. So we turned back in fierce discouragement, and sat in the valley to wait some more for good weather.

It rained steadily, and was cloudy for nearly four days. But on the morning of the fifth day, the sun came out, and just after lunch we decided that the time had come.

I rushed over to Tairraz to tell him to be ready at four o'clock. Then we telephoned the guides, and told them to be at the hotel at the same time. We hurriedly piled up our



Georges, Bradford, Antoine.



The Aerial Railway.

THE AERIAL RAILWAY

equipment, and got on our mountain clothes. By the time that Georges had arrived, with Antoine and Tairraz, we were all ready.

The provisions had been ordered, and were waiting in the hotel hall, and I went over to the bake-shop, down the street, where I got a couple of dozen rolls, to eat with our large supply of honey.

At four o'clock on the afternoon of August 9th the expedition got under way. We found an auto, which took us down the valley for a mile, to the foot of the aerial railway, which climbs the slope of the Aiguille du Midi for nearly five thousand feet.

This aerial railway is a great time-saver because it takes you up five thousand feet in only twenty minutes! There isn't much excitement in the ride, as the towers of the railway aren't very high, and the car you ride in goes pretty close to the ground. Still, you *do* go higher than the trees, and the views all the way are wonderful.

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As you go past the towers that hold the wire up, there is a very queer sensation, as the car gives a little duck and jump. That is the only thrill of the aerial railway. The cars that you ride in are simply ridiculous. They look just like little bathtubs with roofs and windows. The seats in them are tilted, so that all the way up the steep part of the road, you can sit without slipping off!

When we got to the top of the railway, we went into the little hotel there (the Station des Glaciers), and got some fruit to eat the next day on the mountains. Then we set out along the path, over dirt and loose rocks, that leads to the Plan de l'Aiguille hut, where we were going to spend the night.

Above Chamonix, to the left of Mont Blanc, rise the four great groups of the Aiguilles ("aiguille" is the French word for "needle"). The group on the extreme left is composed of the Aiguille des Grands Charmoz and the Aiguille de Grépon. Then there is a glacier

THE AERIAL RAILWAY

called the Glacier des Nantillons. After the glacier comes the Blaitière group, then another glacier, then the Plan group, then the Glacier des Pèlerins, and finally the huge group of the Aiguille du Midi.

This great range of rocky pinnacles rises directly out of a sort of narrow, sloping plain of débris and loose rocks, gathered there by the three great glaciers which descend from the aiguilles

Right square below the Plan group, and between the Glacier de Blaitière and the Glacier des Pèlerins, is a wonderful grassy slope, rising above the surrounding desolate fields of rocks. On this slope is situated the chalet, or hut, of the Plan de l'Aiguille. The Plan de l'Aiguille is the name given to this vast plateau of loose rock below the aiguilles.

To get to the hut from the top of the aerial railway we had to walk about fifty minutes partly along the level, and partly down hill over that plain of rocks.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

About half way between the railway and the hut we had to cross the Glacier des Pèlerins. However, the glacier was in very good condition (that is, there were practically no crevasses in it), and we got to the other side in less than twenty minutes, without any trouble at all.

The walk from the other side of the glacier to the hut was down a very beautiful grassy slope, from which we could look back, every now and then, and see the avalanches racing down the face of the Aiguille du Midi.

There is nothing more terrifying, even to *look* at, than an avalanche. We would hear a low roar behind us, and turning around, we could see that a great hunk of ice or snow had been melted off by the sun's heat, way up there on the snow ridges of the Aiguille du Midi. A little farther below, we could see that great block, now shattered into hundreds of tiny pieces, falling more and more rapidly every second. All the way down the face



Sherry Jumping a Crevasse on the Glacier des Pèlerins.



A Study in Footwear Snapped on the Glacier des Pèlerins.

THE AERIAL RAILWAY

of the Aiguille, this roaring mass of snow and ice gathered rocks with it, and came tearing down over the cliffs, just like an enormous waterfall. Then the noise slowly died away, and the echoes ceased, as the avalanche came to a stop on the upper slopes of the Glacier des Pèlerins.

It always made me shiver to watch those terrible cascades of ice and rock, as they raced relentlessly along. And I shivered all the harder when I thought of how helpless I would be in the path of one of them.

We walked briskly down the grassy slope, and in a few minutes the sounds of the avalanches had faded away, and we were at the Plan de l'Aiguille hut.

I was much surprised to find that the hut was nothing at all like the Couvercle cabin, where we had stayed while hunting the crystals. It was a real little stone house, with the outside covered with cement, and it was painted white on the inside. There were

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two rooms with plaster and wall-paper on the first floor—one was a dining-room; the other a kitchen and guides' room combined.

On the second floor there were a number of nice little rooms, one of which Sherry and I took. It had *real spring beds* in it!

It was well on toward eight o'clock, when we had finished supper, and were up in the room watching the marvellous sunset out of the window.

There was a perfect sea of clouds below us to the west, and as the sun sank beyond the horizon, every single one was tinged to a brilliant red. It reminded me of the sunrise on Mont Blanc that we had seen on the crystal trip, a few days before.

It got dark very quickly, and the lights of Chamonix way below appeared one by one. Soon it looked as if there were a great luminous spider in the valley, from the way all the streets ran out from the central square, which was all ablaze with light.

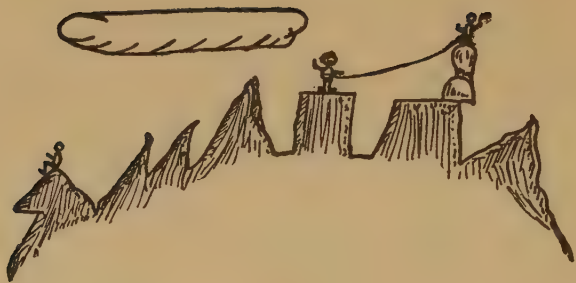
THE AERIAL RAILWAY

At half-past eight o'clock we got ready a Roman candle and some red fire, with which to signal mother in the valley. When the appointed time arrived, Sherry ran out onto the terrace of rocks below our window and touched off the red fire, while I fired off the Roman candle from the window.

A moment later we saw a light blinking furiously from the window of the hotel, far below us. We replied with a few flashes made by passing a hat before our candle.

Then the flashing in the valley ceased, and after having prepared our sacks for the next morning, we hit our beds with a will and dropped off to sleep in a hurry.





CHAPTER IV

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

THAT night wasn't like the one that I had had on the board bunks at Couvercle! I slept, and I slept like a rock, until a man came to the door and announced to me in French that "my hour had come!"

You always have to thank these men who come to wake you, or they just go right on pounding the door down. So I thanked him heartily for his kindness, and then woke up Sherry. He had slept soundly right through all the racket!

As our packs were all made up, and our

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

clothes ready, we were downstairs in just a few minutes. Then we went out to take a look at the weather.

It was crisp and cold, but not a single star was shining. The sky was all misty. Georges soon came out of the darkness with Antoine and Tairraz and after a glance at the conditions they declared it better to wait for a while to see what was going to happen. It was then two-thirty in the morning. Another guide had got up at one-thirty and said that then the sky had been all clear, so that didn't raise our hopes at all.

We all went to bed in despair, only to be wakened once more at three o'clock. The clouds were beginning to disappear. It was fine and cool, which was an excellent sign, and when we went outside, day was already beginning to break on top of Mont Blanc.

We had a speedy breakfast of honey, toast and goat's milk (terrible stuff). Then, as Antoine and Georges weren't quite ready to

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start, Tairraz, Sherry and I started on ahead, telling them to catch up to us.

The path swung in short zig-zags up the grassy slope, down which we had come the afternoon before. Then, when some distance above the hut, it bore off to the left in the direction of the Grépon. It now climbed the moraine of the Glacier de Blaitière, and began to cross the glacier itself. As you know, of course, a moraine is the long line of loose rocks and dirt at the very edge of the glacier, which the glacier pushes along with it as it moves.

Once on the glacier we advanced quite speedily, but Antoine and Georges soon caught up to us. There were no crevasses at all on the part of the glacier that we crossed, so we made just as good time as we had on the Glacier des Pèlerins the day before.

The way to walk, as we had found on the crystal trip, was to hit a slow pace and keep it continually, without stopping at all. If you

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

stop often to rest, you get far more tired than you do if you keep up a moderate pace for the whole trip.

That of course only applies to walking on paths, glaciers or snow. Naturally when you have to climb on rock you must go very slowly, and stop often to make sure that the man ahead of you is in a good position, in case you should slip.

On the other side of the Glacier de Blaitière we made our way across a lot of moraine and broken rock. There were regular fields of it that we had to pass over. Then, by way of two wide snowfields that we traversed (as you know, to traverse is to walk across a thing without either climbing or descending), we finally gained the moraine of the Glacier des Nantillons, just forty minutes after leaving Plan de l'Aiguille.

There we found a big rock. Under this we dumped all of the extra stockings, and other stuff that we wouldn't need on the climb.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

When all was ready once more, we started off and left Georges behind the moraine to change to his climbing suit—a rather important operation that he had neglected to do at Plan de l'Aiguille.

This time we didn't cross the glacier. We began to climb straight *up* it. The first part was dreadfully slippery ice, to which my shoes even with their formidable array of nails would hardly stick. It was much easier walking after a few hundred yards even though the slope *did* get a lot steeper, because of the layer of hard snow which covered the ice. This had been deposited there by the numerous avalanches of the last week.

Our route up the Nantillons wound back and forth underneath a huge wall of ice, the edge of which constantly falls off, due to the movement of the glacier. The snow through which we were walking most of the time was gouged out into deep grooves by the avalanches made by these ice-falls.



A "V-Chimney" Like the One on the Charmoz.



The Overhanging Ice-Wall on the Nantillons Séracs.

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

These dangers of avalanches, however, don't begin until nearly noon. Then the sun has had plenty of time to melt and loosen up the great, menacing pinnacles of ice. (These pinnacles are called séracs.) As it was then only five in the morning, we were absolutely safe for a while, at any rate.

Nevertheless, time after time, people have been swept away by avalanches there, even at early hours in the morning. There *is* a certain element of luck in the game.

One story that the guides tell is about a young woman and a guide who went together to the top of the glacier, not to climb a peak, but just for the glacier walk. On the way down, they were running carelessly along over a part of the glacier where there are lots of crevasses.

The guide was going last, as is always the rule for glacier climbing. That is, it's the rule when descending so that if you slip into a crevasse, there is somebody strong above

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

you to hold the rope. But this guide was a frisky fellow. Instead of the tourist falling in as is the usual case, the *guide* went through into a hidden crevasse! The young lady was running downwards so fast over the soft, slippery snow, which covered the ice, that when the rope jerked her, she managed to hold tight.

It was a terrific jerk, and she lost her ice-axe because she was taken too much off her guard. With that gone, she had nothing to which to fasten the rope, while she went for help, for of course she couldn't pull him out herself.

She sat on that glacier for many, many hours underneath the wall of séracs, which at any moment might have fallen and wiped them both off the face of the earth. But, somehow, all that day those tons of ice stayed fixed. Once in a while they would creak and groan, but they never fell.

The guide begged her to untie herself and

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leave him to die, but she stuck to it. Night began to come on, and she tried to change her position in order to get a little warmer. As she moved she found that there was no longer any pull on the rope, and moving cautiously forward, she peered down into the darkness of the crevasse. A low cry told her that the guide was still alive on the other end! The rope, during the day, on account of the sun's heat, had sunk a little into the ice on the rim of the crevasse. Now that evening had come, the water-soaked rope had frozen into the ice and was fixed there fast!

She told the guide of her discovery, and then, unroping herself, she recovered her ice-axe, and raced downwards over that treacherous glacier by moonlight to try to get aid up to her stricken guide before morning. She got down the glacier safely, and went to the Montenvers hotel, a favorite climber's resort on the way down to Chamonix.

There she got a group of guides who went

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to the glacier, and before day dawned they had hauled the limp, but living body of the guide to safety!

The rescue party was scarcely off the glacier before the wall of séracs, which had so long remained still, fell with a crash and obliterated the crevasse in which the guide had hung safely for over twenty hours!

That is the Glacier des Nantillons, and so it was when we climbed it. It is always treacherous—you never can tell what it's going to do. At six o'clock we reached the Rognon, a little island of rock in the midst of the glacier, where the French Alpine Club has erected a little refuge of rocks and galvanized iron.

We drank some water and tea in front of the refuge, and ate a few crackers; then we were off again.

Above the Rognon the glacier grew very steep, and we had to cut steps in a few places, in order to be sure of our footing. We

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reached the base of the sérac wall in about ten minutes. There Georges warned me that we must climb very fast as we had got a rather late start and he wanted to diminish the chance of getting hit by falling ice!

We simply *rushed* upwards under the séracs, and over the great heaps of loose ice and snow, that had fallen from above the afternoon before. I heaved a sigh of relief as we reached a slope of smooth glacier, without crevasses or dangerous pinnacles of ice.

The slope of snow on which we then were leads to the foot of the Couloir Charmoz-Grépon. This couloir (ravine) is a long strip of very easy rock and snow climbing, that leads from the glacier to the ridge at the lowest point between the Grands Charmoz and the Grépon. It divides the two mountains, and makes the Charmoz and the Grépon two very separate ridges of rock.

We left our ice-axes in a sheltered spot on the glacier near the bottom of the couloir.

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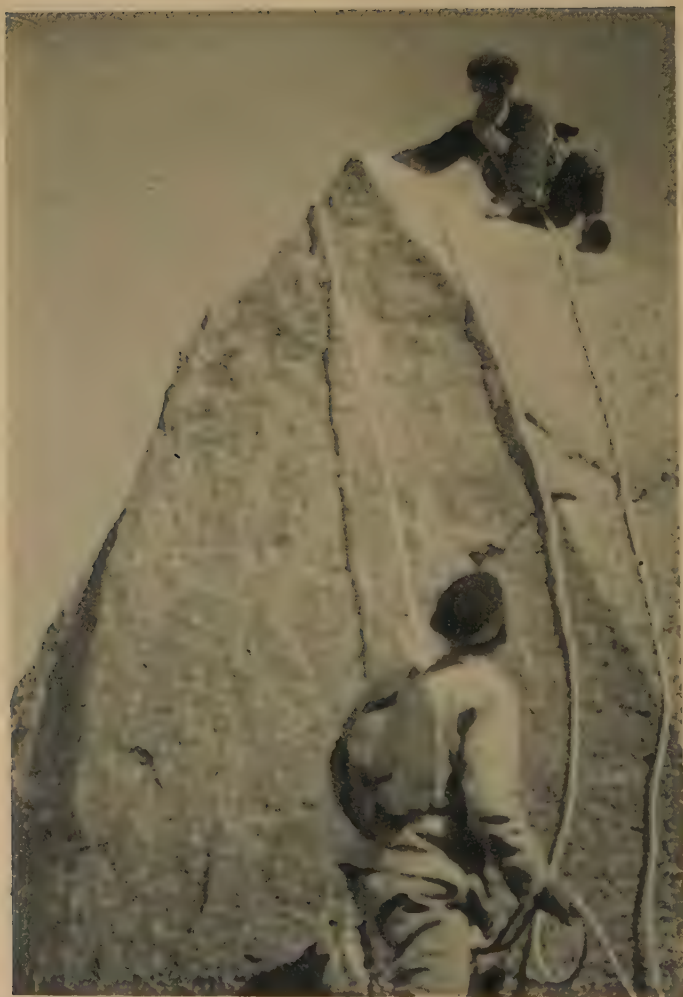
Then we roped up and the climb began. To start, we followed the rocks on the left side of the couloir, in order to avoid the treacherous snow in the bottom part of it.

The lower part of the climb was extremely dull and easy, but, after a few hundred feet, we left the couloir on our right, and traversed for a good distance across the face of the Charmoz. By making this traverse, we got to the beginning of a large crack, in the otherwise absolutely smooth rock.

The crack wasn't either so steep or so difficult as those that were to follow, and neither of us had any difficulty in getting up it. We used the ordinary trick for crack climbing, of sticking your right knee in the hole. Then you advance slowly, but surely by jamming in your right elbow, and changing the position of your knee. Of course it's slow, terribly slow, until you get used to it, but after a little experience, you can shoot up a fissure like lightning!



Georges and Bradford on the Third Peak of the Charmoz—the Grépon in the Background.



**Georges Descending the Third Peak of the Grands Charmoz, while
Bradford watches to His Ropes.**

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Once at the top of this first fissure, we climbed fairly speedily upwards over very steep rocks with large handholds, until we reached the bottom of the second crack. There are three difficult places in the ascent of the Charmoz and this is the second.

However, it was the worst of the three bad places! It was an almost vertical crack formed between two great rocks. Its shape was much like a big "V." In the very bottom of the V was the crack, and the two arms represent the two big slabs of rock. The picture shows the place very clearly. The fissure was too small to jam your knee into, and too large and smooth to get a good grip in with your hand. It was, on the whole, very bothersome.

Georges went up it like a rocket, and then called for me to follow. My fix, I am afraid, was worse than his had been, for I had my Graflex in my little knapsack and it was nearly smashed to bits during the next few minutes (I thought so at the time)!

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How I ever managed to get to the top of that awful thing I do not know. I jammed my toes into it, and pushed with my back (and the Graflex!) against one of the big slabs. Finally I got hold of a big rock at the top and writhed myself out onto a platform, where I stopped to rest from my exertions.

I guess that it was my sack that had made the crack seem so hard to me. For the first time that I climbed it, with Alfred Couttet as guide, I had no sack and found no difficulty there at all. I now began to have terrible visions of the next chimney, which was the last before the ridge. At its foot Georges took all the sacks and piled them in a heap. He said that they could be hauled up later, on a piece of thin rope that he had in his pocket.

This chimney is called the Cheminée de Glace (Ice-Chimney), for at all times the floor of the chimney is covered with a coating of thick, smooth ice. This ice remains in

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

the crack because of the way that the rocks shield its bottom from the sun. No sunlight ever enters the Cheminée de Glace, except for a few minutes, just before sunset. For this reason, any rain that falls, or any snow that melts into the chimney fills it fuller with ice, and makes it very hard to climb.

The first time that I had done the chimney, I had had no great difficulty until the very end of it, where there was a great hunk of ice. This pinnacle of ice struck me full in the chest when I tried to lean forward. I couldn't, for the life of me, reach the handhold at the top, with which to pull myself out. I had struggled and struggled and *struggled*, but in the end Alfred had been forced to extricate me by pulling me out with the rope!

On this trip, however, I was determined to do the whole climb without being pulled once, so I entered the lower part of the Cheminée de Glace in great anxiety!

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

To my surprise I discovered that the ice was almost all gone. Although it had rained a great deal in the last week, the water had been all fairly warm, and had actually melted the ice instead of forming heaps more!

The lower part had a rock jammed in it. This I had great trouble in passing, but I managed to get over it without being pulled. Once on top of the rock, I made my way swiftly up the easier part of the passage. It was just big enough for my body to squeeze through when standing up.

There were no handholds in it at all, and it was just like an extremely narrow corridor, tilted up very steeply, with ice on the floor. It was so narrow that if I had hunched up my shoulders I could glide up it easily, but if I straightened them out I stuck fast. Whenever I wanted a rest I simply straightened out my shoulders and stayed that way until I wanted to go on again. Then I loosened them up and put my hands way up ahead,

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pressing them for all I was worth against the walls of the crack.

That pressure was enough to keep me from slipping back, and by kicking my nailed boots well into the ice, I managed to squirm my shoulders to where my hands were. Then I put my hands forward once more, holding myself with my shoulders. That's the way to go up the Cheminée de Glace, and its heaps of fun and work combined!

The ice pinnacle was now all melted away, so I had no difficulty at all in getting out at the top of the crack. From there to the ridge was only a matter of ten minutes' climbing like that in the couloir Charmoz-Grépon.

We were now ten thousand eight hundred feet high, and had only about a hundred more feet to climb before getting to the summit. But the summit was a good hundred yards away, because it was clear at the other end of the ridge on which we were standing. What we had to do now was to climb along

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the *very crest* of the ridge all the way to the top.

The sun was now well up and we could begin to take the moving pictures, or "cinéma" as the guides called it. We had had hardly any chance at all to take pictures up to the ridge, as that face of the mountain had been all in shadow.

After we had had a little food, the party split up into two sections—the photographers, and those to be photographed. The first was Tairraz with Antoine to help him. The second was composed of Georges (leading), me (in the middle of the rope), and Sherry.

The photographers stationed themselves on the last pinnacle of the ridge. Our group commenced the ascent of the next one, as soon as I had had time to change from my leather boots to a pair of crêpe-soled sneakers. Nailed boots are better than sneakers for climbing with tiny footholds, but for climbing where there are no footholds at all, and

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simply pressure or stickiness is needed, there is nothing to beat a crêpe-soled sneaker.

The "gendarme" or pinnacle that we were about to climb, overhung dreadfully on the side up which we had to go. Georges got in a good position a little below its base, and commenced to try and throw a rope over its top, with which to pull ourselves up. There was just enough wind to make the easy throw of about ten feet almost impossible. In fact, the last time that I had climbed the pinnacle with Alfred Couttet, we had taken fully fifteen minutes in just arranging the rope for that short place.

Georges at last managed to get one strand of the rope near the desired spot. The place was out of sight from where he was, so I stood on a small rock nearby and directed him, as he flicked the other strand over the right place. Then he took the two strands in his hand. Partially by pulling himself, and partially by walking up the face of the

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rock, he got over the bad place and reached the top to the little gendarme.

It looked rather difficult as we watched, but when it came to be my turn I found that there was nothing to it at all. The movie camera had taken the whole operation, and kept on buzzing as we made the ascents of the next three gendarmes. All three were small and very easy, the rock being full of handholds.

When we reached the top of the third pinnacle the movies stopped, and the photographers seemed to be working over still pictures of us. It was terribly cold with the early morning breeze, sitting waiting on the top of that dreadfully pointed rock. It was also an excellent test for dizziness! On our left a vertical wall of rock dropped a couple of hundred feet to a slope of glare ice. This slope in turned dropped some five thousand feet to the great glacier called the Mer de Glace, sparkling in the sunlight a mile below us.



Bradford and Georges doing the "Courte-échelle" on the Carrée.



Bradford on the Baton Wicks.

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

On the right it wasn't nearly so bad. A rocky cliff dropped only about two thousand feet to the still dark and sombre glacier des Nantillons. We were in a rather eerie position!

One of my legs was hanging over one side, the other was beating restlessly over the Mer de Glace. As a whole I was rather cold and uncomfortable, when we received word that the pictures were all done, and that we could go on again.

Here Sherry went first and Georges last. The guide always goes last in descending to take care of the ropes.

After Sherry was safely down, I took the rope between Georges and me, doubled it, and placed it over the very top of the gendarme as my brother had done. Then I took the two ends, the middle being firmly caught over the rock, and let myself slowly slip down the ten feet of smooth rock to the notch between that gendarme and the next one.

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The next little peak on the ridge is known as the Carrée on account of its very square appearance from Plan de l'Aiguille.

It was all smooth rock on the side where we were, so we had to climb around to the opposite side before being able to get to its top. Here we let Georges go ahead again. It was not a difficult spot, but it was extremely *delicate*, so we secured his rope safely behind a little jutting-out rock, and paid it out to him slowly as he advanced. If he'd fallen then we would have been able to hold him very easily.

There were no handholds at all, and only very, very small footholds. He went forward cautiously and slowly, carefully adjusting his feet in the tiny roughnesses in the rock, on which he had to walk. Then, all of a sudden, he reached around on the other side of the rock out of our sight. And, with a quick movement, disappeared!

The corner around which he had gone looked

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so smooth that it seemed almost impossible to believe that he could have done it so quickly.

It was now my turn. Sherry fixed my rope in the way that we had secured Georges' and I planted my left foot in a tiny chink in the rock. Then I advanced my right foot very gingerly, leaning against the rock with my hands until I was in a firm position once more.

That was the delicate part. By reaching around the corner of the rock I *just* managed to get one hand into the hidden hold. I gripped it firmly and, with a little jump, swung through the air, holding on for dear life. I saw the glacier swim below me, nearly half a mile away, and then my feet landed on terra firma once more!

Sherry was soon with us. The next move was to get to the top of the Carrée. It took only about three seconds.

The peak was just too high for me to reach

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its top edge, while standing on a little pointed rock with one foot. Georges made it easy by standing on the rock, and then helping me up onto his shoulders. From there I could easily grasp the top and I pulled myself out onto it. Sherry didn't give Georges a "courte-échelle" that is, let Georges get on his shoulders. (Courte-échelle is the French for "short ladder.") So I helped Georges up the first few feet by pulling him. Then we two pulled Sherry up like a bag of meal!

We lay there on the perfectly smooth, flat rock basking in the sun, until the camera department of the expedition caught up to us. Then we descended—I first was *let* down much in the way that we had pulled Sherry up. Then Sherry came down onto my shoulders. Finally we both aided Georges to the bottom.

The Charmoz were almost over. The last bit of interest (the best) was the Baton Wicks. The Baton is a little finger of rock about twelve feet high sitting on the edge of a

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

platform of flat rock next to the Carrée. The platform is so large and flat that it is called the Esplanade. It is about twenty feet long and ten feet wide.

The esplanade was a snap to get to from the notch between it and the Carrée. I could just reach the edge after going up a little fissure. When we were all up there, I commenced the ascent of the Baton for the movies.

The Baton is so small on top that only one person can climb it at a time. So, in order to make safe the person climbing, you always have to throw a rope over the top, tie it to his waist and always keep it tight as he climbs. For if you fell from the Baton you might even kill yourself.

It is a short but delicate little climb, much like the passing of the Carrée. I grabbed the edge of a big crack halfway up. Then, by a lot of twistings, I managed to get my feet where my hands were and slowly stood up in the crack. From there I could just reach

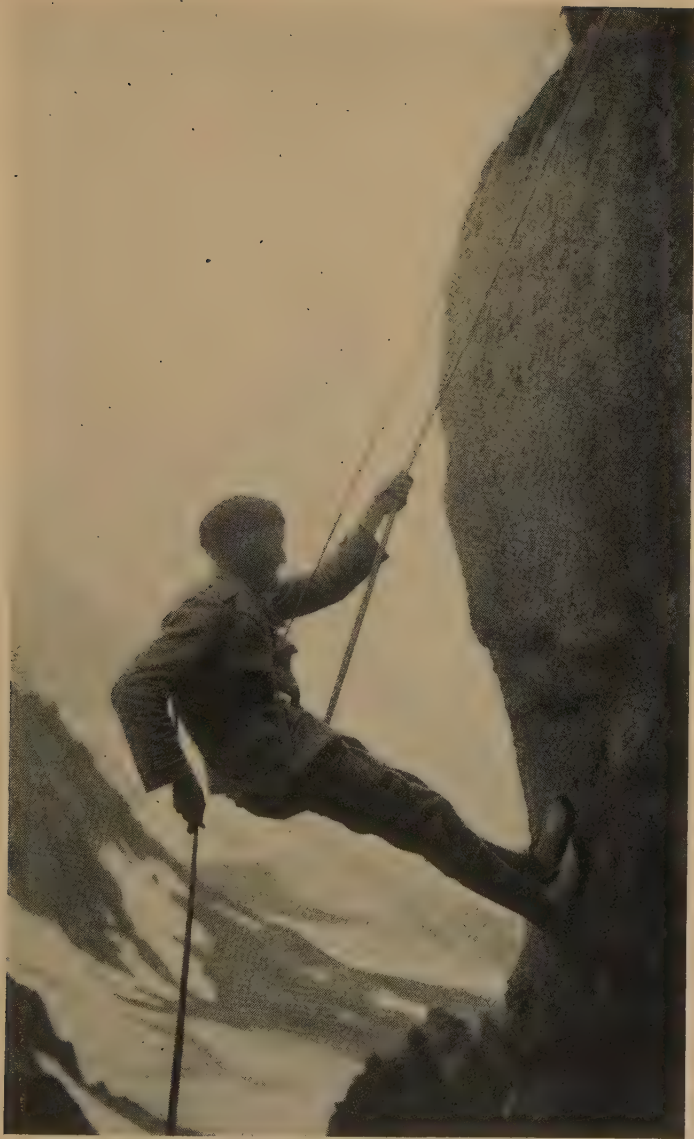
AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

a little handhold on the summit. And after more contortions I dragged myself out on top and stood up.

It was a *terrible* little spot! The top is less than two feet in diameter, and slopes awfully, so that it's hard enough to get up. But to stand up on that silly pinnacle with a drop of a *mile* on one side was too much to ask of anybody!

You can imagine the sensation that I got from standing there for *fifteen* minutes, while the others tried to get the movie camera going. The outer edge of the pinnacle wasn't on the Esplanade at all, and overhung slightly. So that when I stood up on top I could look right straight down for several hundred feet to the ice slope, and thence to the Mer de Glace, a mile below.

About two hundred feet away on the very summit of the Grands Charmoz we saw a number of climbers seated. They had just climbed to the top and had not done the



"En Rappel."



A Silhouette of the Author on the Baton Wicks. The Grépon and Mont Blanc in the Background.



Panorama from the Col Charmoz—Grépon.

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

“traverse” that we were perspiring over! A little to the right of the Grands Charmoz the massive Grépon towered up, cutting the blue sky like a sharp, black knife.

At last! They had got the camera fixed and the pictures were over. I hustled down and Sherry went up. In the meantime Antoine and Tairraz raced by us and got ahead before Sherry was down. They were going to get movies of us as we descended from the Esplanade.

Georges took out an extra rope a hundred and twenty feet long. This he doubled. Then he placed the middle of it over a sharp little pinnacle on the Baton, letting the two ends dangle down the forty vertical feet between us and the next notch in the ridge.

Sherry, who was now down, was the first to go. He placed the rope between his legs, and then twisted it around his arm. Then he walked off the esplanade backwards and kept right on walking down that vertical

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cliff till he got to the bottom! I followed him as soon as he was off the ropes at the bottom. The picture shows excellently how this "descente en rappel" is done. I think that it's the best fun in all mountain climbing, but it *is* pretty scary the first few times that you do it! It is called the *descente en rappel* because, in French the verb "rappeler" means "to pull back." When you are through with the doubled rope, and everybody is down, all you have to do is take hold of one end of it and pull until the whole rope is down. For, as you remember, the rope wasn't tied a bit, but just doubled over the little pinnacle.

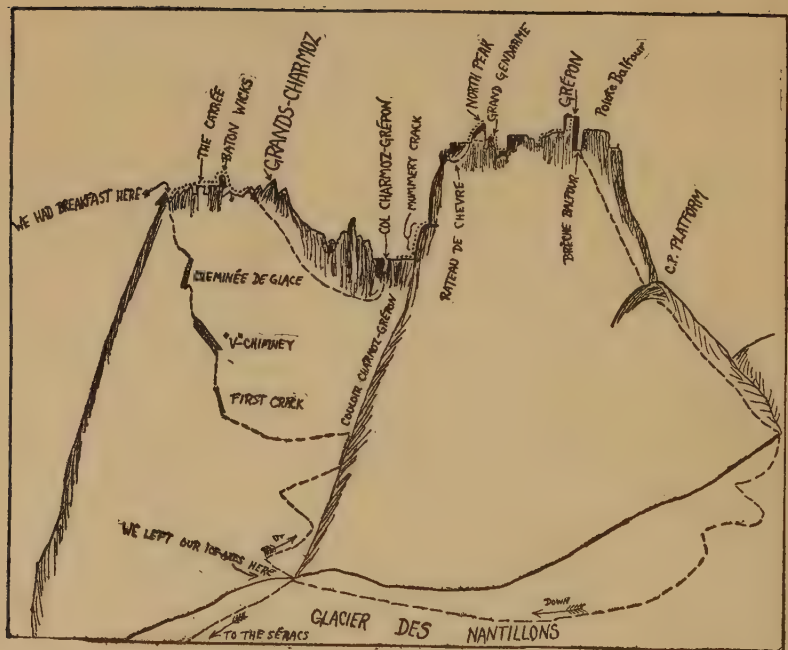
Sometimes, when the pinnacle that you find is apt to *jam the rope* so that you can't pull it down, you place a little ring of rope over the pinnacle. Then you place the rappel rope through this ring, and it never sticks when you pull it. That's what we did three times later in the day on the Grépon. Of

THE GRANDS CHARMOZ

course you just leave the ring hanging there when you pull down the rope.

Georges pulled down the rappel and rolled it up again in his sack. Then we advanced once more—briskly now, because it was getting late in the morning, and we had to get movies of all the Grépon, too, before the day was over. Since both Sherry and I had climbed the highest peak of the Charmoz once before, we decided to pass below it, and not lose the time which was now precious for the Grépon.

It took us no time to descend past the summit of the Charmoz and thence, by a lot of steep rocks we got into the top of the Couloir Charmoz-Grépon. A short climb over very icy, slippery, dangerous rocks brought us to the Col Charmoz-Grépon—the lowest point between the two mountains.





CHAPTER V

THE NORTH PEAK

THE moment that we crossed over the col and onto the Mer de Glace side, the wind ceased entirely and it grew nice and warm. The sun was boiling down in a very cheery manner, and we all sat down on a wide shelf of rock to wait for Antoine and Tairraz. They had been taking pictures, and had got a good way behind us while putting away the cameras.

Georges unroped us, as it was a good safe

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spot with a number of wide platforms on which we could sit as we ate.

The last time we had eaten had been on the Charmoz, and we were simply ravenous. We had stowed away a huge amount of honey and breakfast buns, when Antoine and Tairraz appeared. They seemed to be in the same state in which we were, and we all sat in a row with our legs dangling over that five thousand foot precipice, and ate to our heart's content.

We had some canned pineapples, and when they were finished I amused myself by throwing the can over the cliff, and listening to it as it dropped and dropped and dropped, banging and clattering over the rocks for nearly a minute, before it was lost to sound and sight in the distance.

When we had finished, Tairraz and I walked along some of the platforms to a point where we could look up and see the top of the Grépon. A few hundred feet below the sum-



Lunch.



The Mummery Crack.

Bradford getting started from the lower platform.

THE NORTH PEAK

mit, on the Mer de Glace face I could see the terrible little Aiguille de Roc au Grépon, which a friend of mine from Boston had climbed for the first time a few days before. Its top had never before been touched by human foot. As for me, I do not see how any human foot ever got there at all!

As we turned about to go back to the packs and arrange our stuff for the climb, a puff of fog appeared below us near the Aiguille de Roc. In five minutes we were in a thick bank of clouds. I climbed up a little and looked over the Col Charmoz-Grépon. On the other side it was all sunlight! Not a single cloud was in sight. I yelled the news to the rest, and, much relieved, we roped ourselves up again and started off for one of the most difficult rock climbs in Europe.

Guido Rey, the great climber and writer, has described the ridge of the Grépon as "a series of remarkable coincidences!" As seen from Chamonix, it appears to be far the easi-

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est of the five Aiguilles, whereas it is the hardest. From Chamonix it looks like a long castle wall with turrets. From the Charmoz, the Grépon seems to be nothing but a giant knife!

Mummery, the famous Alpinist, whom I mentioned in the second chapter, was the first to reach the top of the Great Devil, what the Grépon was then called.

As you see it from the Charmoz, the Grépon is, as I said, like a knife. On its left side, and about half way up, there is a big round hole known as the Trou du Canon (Cannon Hole). Mummery saw, from careful study, that if he could just get to that hole, the greater part of the difficulties would be over. The way that he reached it was by what is known as the Mummery Crack—without doubt the most famous single place on any mountain in the Alps.

The crack is a single rent which runs up the smooth and vertical wall leading from the

THE NORTH PEAK

Col Charmoz-Grépon to the Trou du Canon. Its height is almost exactly seventy feet, so when you have climbed it you have raised yourself about the height of a six-story house.

We climbed over easy rocks to a point about twenty feet above the Col Charmoz-Grépon. Here we turned sharp to the right and went through a tiny doorway in the rock, which placed us on a level with the middle of the crack. Here Georges, who was going ahead, told me to look after his rope and place it over a little nubble of rock, to secure him in case he should fall while climbing the crack. He then tied a piece of heavy twine about his waist, and descended very cautiously over the icy rocks to the bottom of the crack.

I had all I could do in looking after his rope and twine, and keeping them running out smoothly, so I hardly saw him climbing the crack at all. Once I heard him mutter something to himself and then he made a

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loud exclamation. His foot was jammed in the crack.

To get your foot caught in that crack is about the most dangerous thing imaginable for the first man up, because it is a very ticklish bit of work getting it out again without a fall. I watched to his rope extra carefully during the next few minutes. Luckily it wasn't badly stuck, and in a minute he was under way again.

Halfway up the fissure there is a little platform about a foot square, upon which you can rest and get your breath. Once at the resting-spot, the difficulty is practically over. The lower part is climbed entirely by jamming your right elbow and knee into the fissure. There are no handholds at all below the platform! Above it there are a few little rocks stuck in the fissure that you can grab with your right hand.

When you have got in a standing position on these rocks, you can just reach another

THE NORTH PEAK

resting platform with a wonderful handhold for your left hand. From there to the top of the fissure is only a few feet with good handholds all the way.

Like all the guides, Georges only took about two minutes to get to the top. There he sat a moment to get his breath. Then he took the small cord that he had attached to his waist, we tied the knapsacks to it and he hauled them up one by one, laying them out beside him on the big platform at the top of the crack.

When this was done, my turn had come. Tairraz was stationed on a big platform to my right, ready to take movies of the climb. Antoine was right behind me to secure my rope in the way in which I had fixed Georges'.

With a heart beating like a pile-driver, I descended nearly to the bottom of the crack and crossed into it. I looked up a moment and saw Georges way at the top grinning down at me. He always laughed when I

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

was in a bad fix, and I couldn't see anything at all that was funny about my situation! Then and there I made up my mind to climb that crack from top to bottom without being pulled one inch. Georges claimed I couldn't do it. I yelled to him to loosen up the rope entirely, and just to hold it so as to be a safeguard in case I should fall. Then I stuck my right elbow and knee in the crack. My left knee and elbow just slipped smoothly up and down, when I tried to find something to get a hold on!

It was just as I had found it the day that I had climbed it before. There was but one difference—this time I had on a pair of sneakers. That was a big difference however. Where the nail boots would slip, the sneakers stuck like glue. What was still more—I could not possibly get my sneakers jammed in a fissure the way Georges had caught his shoe. The sneakers were soft, and I could pull them out again easily.



Getting into the Hole that Leads to the Râteau de Chèvre.



The Rateau de Chèvre.

THE NORTH PEAK

In a minute I was on the first platform, puffing and blowing from my exertion. Twenty seconds saw me off again. There was a difficult spot for about two or three feet above the platform, then I got hold of a little stone jammed in the fissure. In a jiffy I had my knee on it, and with a little more twisting I was standing up.

I jammed my knee and elbow into the crack again and went a few feet more until my foot was on the highest of the three little rocks. There I rested a minute or so to get my breath, and looked down over what I had climbed.

I have never been dizzy once on a mountain, but I must confess that that one glance down the crack was the supreme test! The fissure went absolutely straight down for about fifty feet. The first platform already looked far away. And below the crack that awful slope of ice-covered rocks ran downwards, right to the Glacier des Nantillons! I

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

turned to my climbing again with a desire to get out of that fissure as fast as I could. And I don't think that anybody could blame me for it! My left hand soon had the good hold, and up I went to the last platform, with my feet swinging wildly in the air.

Good handholds now appeared on the right. One more effort! I jammed myself into the crack, and with three great pushes and twists I reached the top, and stretched myself out among the knapsacks, panting for breath. That fissure is a great test of one's endurance, because every single moment all the way up, every one of your muscles and nerves from head to foot, is used to the very extreme. No wonder you are so exhausted when it's over!

Georges shouted down to Sherry that I had done the crack without being pulled, and challenged him to come on. Sherry started out, and a few minutes later his head appeared over the edge of the platform; he was

THE NORTH PEAK

puffing and blowing like me. He too had come all the way without being pulled. Antoine came next, and he was followed by a tremendous sack of photographic equipment. Before Tairraz had a chance to get to the top Georges, Sherry and I were off again.

We went through the Cannon Hole, and then we climbed over some easy blocks of granite, until nearly to the crest of the first part of the Grépon ridge. A smooth wall of rock now confronted us. However, there was a tiny hole right through it. In fact, it was so small that Georges had to take off his sack to get inside.

There was a terrible little spot just before going through the hole, where I lingered for ages with a good handhold, my waist stuck between two rocks, and feet kicking in the air! I finally managed to get myself dislodged, and, by way of the hole, came out on the other side of the mountain.

I stood up now and surveyed the next

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

difficulty. It is called the Rateau de Chèvre (Goat's Back). You climb it by placing one foot on each side of the Goat's Back, which is a long, steep slab of rock, and then pulling yourself upward with your hands. The very backbone of the slab is a little rough, and by using your hands almost entirely, you can pull yourself all the way to the top.

When I came out of the hole, Georges was already half way up the Rateau, and in a minute his feet went up into the air, as he got to the top and disappeared behind a big rock. Sherry was right on my heels, and to my surprise Antoine and Tairraz were already with us—they certainly must have hurried!

Georges cried out from above that it was my turn. But just at that moment the clouds rolled in. We waited for a couple of minutes until they disappeared once more. Then I took the opportunity to climb the Rateau as fast as I could for a movie. The sneakers stuck so well that I hardly had to

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use my hands at all, as is necessary if you have boots on. I got to the top in no time.

Sherry, who had put his sneakers on, now made just as good time as I had. When we three were all on top, however, I remembered that no still picture had been taken of either of us climbing the fissure. So I descended again all the way to the bottom, and had Tairraz take a couple of me as I climbed it once more. That's why in the picture you don't see the rope between Sherry and me coming down behind me. You can see *two* ropes leading upward from my waist—one is the end that goes to Georges, and the other goes to Sherry.

At the top there is an absolutely flat platform, even larger than the Esplanade of the Baton Wicks. On one end of it was a monolith, much in the same position as the Baton, but about three times as large. It was the north peak of the Grépon, only twelve feet lower than the real summit, which was just

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

in sight, about a hundred yards away along the ridge.

The North Peak has been climbed by people many times, but they have always thrown a rope over the summit, with which to help themselves up. Last summer Georges climbed it alone, and without any rope thrown at all to aid him. If Sherry and I climbed it that way, we would make the first "tourist" ascent of the North Peak without thrown rope. Besides, it was a stunning place to take pictures.

When Tairraz arrived, Antoine gave him his camera out of the sack, and he went to the end of the flat rock to take pictures of us as we climbed.

When all was ready, Antoine leaned against the end of the North Peak and Georges got onto his shoulders. At first he swayed terribly. Then Antoine steadied himself and they got firmly fixed. Next Georges climbed up on Antoine's head and got hold of a very,



A Delicate Spot—Getting Started on the North Peak.



The North Peak.

Georges is on top, Bradford on Sherry's shoulders.

THE NORTH PEAK

very tiny crack running along the edges of the steep rock. In vain, he tried twice to get started and then descended to the platform once more.

He said that he would have to change to a pair of sneakers because his shoes slipped so badly. He soon had them on. This time things went well. Once he had his hands in the crack, he gave a graceful little leap from Antoine's shoulders and landed astride the narrow ridge.

The climb was so delicate that he had to keep moving constantly, for fear that he might lose his balance! There were no handholds or footholds at all on the ridge. The top of it was flat and about a foot wide, rising at an angle of about fifty degrees. He mounted this right to the top in about a minute, by walking in a bending position, and using the pressure of his hands on the sides of the ridge to steady himself!

Breathless, we waited at the bottom, and

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

there wasn't a single sound to be heard, except for the clicking of the movie camera and our heavy, tense breathing. I gave a gasp of relief when he reached the top and took off his cap, waving it above his head triumphantly.

I now mounted gingerly on Sherry's shoulders. Being taller than Georges, I reached the crack without having to jump. I struggled for a moment with every muscle in my body tense with effort, and with one hand I managed to get myself astride the ridge. From there to the top I did just what Georges had done. With my sneakers I had no trouble at all, and was soon seated on top beside Georges. Sherry followed me with success. Neither of us was pulled.

Coming down was worse than going up, because I could not see a single thing unless I looked between my feet. That was positively sickening for it made everything look upside down! It seemed as if I had been stepping for hours when I felt the crack in

THE NORTH PEAK

my left hand. I grabbed it, let my legs swing, and at last landed on Sherry's shoulders. He let me down again to the platform.

Even though we weren't pulled during the ascent of the North Peak, the very presence of the rope, and the feeling that I was safe with it around my waist, made me do easily things that would otherwise have been very difficult.

I don't see how Georges ever dared to climb that slab of rock without anything to give him the feeling of safety in case he should slip. For, even with the rope around his waist, he would have fallen a good twenty feet and landed on the rock platform where we were standing. The first man up must have real confidence in himself and iron nerve!





CHAPTER VI

LE GRAND DIABLE—THE GREAT DEVIL

THE clouds were extremely well timed. Whenever we wanted to take a picture they would blow off. Whenever we were preparing our sacks or talking on the platforms, they stayed down tight so that we couldn't see more than twenty feet. Except for the difference in heat, being in a cloud is just like a Turkish bath. It's just a clammy, cold, disagreeable mist—a heavy fog.

Antoine and Tairraz were gone when we

LE GRAND DIABLE

were ready to advance once more. Georges had had to put his shoes into his sack, and the two photographers had left us in order to have plenty of time in preparing their apparatus for the descent of the "Grand Gendarme" which we were about to do.

We passed to the right of the North Summit and, by slipping down a fifteen-foot crack just big enough to hold a person, we reached the notch before the Grand Gendarme. The summit of the gendarme could just be reached from the notch, and Sherry and I pulled ourselves out onto it.

It was a platform made of one big flat rock about four feet square, with a very small pyramid-shaped stone standing in one corner. While Sherry and I were lying out on our stomachs and enjoying the view, I heard a faint yell from behind. It was Georges. His sack was so big that he was stuck in the top of the crack!

He had no trouble in getting himself loose.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

And since the top of the crack was very near the top of the Grand Gendarme, he threw us the end of his twine and we pulled the sack over in the air. Then he slid the crack and was soon with us.

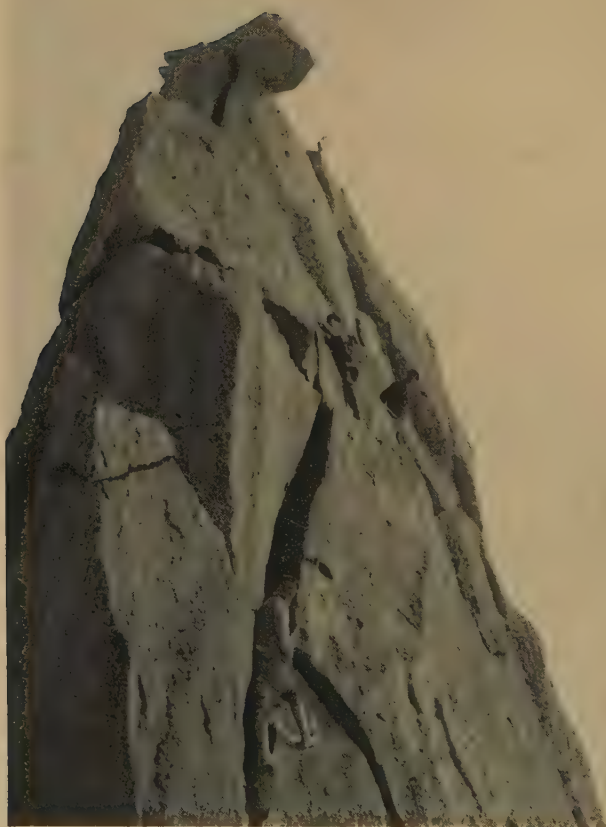
The Grand Gendarme is the largest pinnacle on the whole ridge of the Grépon and is made up of three, enormous, square blocks of granite. All three of them are as smooth as if they had been polished. Once you are at the bottom of it there is no way of return, unless you pull yourself up the rappel-rope! That is what Mummery did on the first ascent of the Grépon before the nowadays route of descent was known.

When we got to the top, of course, the photographers were already at the bottom and prepared to take us as we went down. They had placed a little ring of rope around the pyramid-shaped rock and had put the rappel-rope through that.

Sherry went off first, and slowly slid down



Sherry Slides off the Top of the Grand Gendarme.



The Last Two Cracks of the Grépon.

LE GRAND DIABLE

the sharp ridge of the big rock until he was out of sight. We waited for a minute, and then his voice echoed up from below, saying that he was out of the rappel and that it was my turn. I took the two ends of the rappel-rope, one in each hand, and slid to a little platform about a yard below the summit. There I swung the ropes clear of the great rock so that I could slip smoothly. Then I took hold of the ropes once more and, lying on the ridge of the rock with one foot on each side, I slipped downwards until I was at the joining between the two upper blocks.

Here was a good hold for each foot, and I arranged myself into the ordinary rappel position, with the rope between my legs and over my arms, to descend the last two blocks of stone. At this spot the ridge of the mountain is very narrow, and as I walked slowly down with the rope between my legs, my body hid the bottom from me entirely. All that

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I could see was the great vertical wall of granite that I had just come down, clearly cut in the blue sky, with a drop of thousands of feet on each side. The reason why you cannot rappel straight down from the summit of the gendarme to the bottom is that all three rocks overhang a little toward the Mer de Glace. Why I had to follow the ridge to begin with was in order to get vertically above the ridge once more. If I had rappelled directly from the summit, I would have begun to swing freely in the air!

As soon as I was through with the rappel, I loosened the ropes for Georges and then advanced along a little shelf, where Sherry and the photographers were waiting. Georges hurried behind me and we were soon all on the platform, which turned out to be very flat and comfortable. Here he pulled down the rappel rope from the Grand Gendarme and put it in his sack.

The Vire à Bicyclettes (Bicycle Path!)

LE GRAND DIABLE

was the next place to pass. We crossed over on to the Mer de Glace side. There, by taking a great handhold and making a little jump, we landed one after another on the most remarkable of the "coincidences"—a pathway, made of a single block of absolutely flat stone, between three and five feet wide, and nearly fifty feet long. On the right a vertical wall went above us for some twenty feet, and on the left there was a sheer drop of nearly a mile to the Mer de Glace.

We walked quickly along this, and mounted from its other end to a big platform at the very base of the highest summit of the Grépon. Here Georges mounted ahead once more (I had led on the Vire à Bicyclettes), and in a couple of minutes he was half way from me to the top.

The climb from the platform to the summit we did in two parts. The first part is a fissure or crack in the rock almost exactly the same as the Râteau de Chèvre. That was

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

easy. Then we walked along a shelf of rock for about fifteen feet to the bottom of the final stretch. From there to the summit was a distance of twenty feet.

The Final Crack, as it is called, rends the smooth summital block from top to bottom—a distance of nearly forty feet. By climbing the first little crack and using the shelf, we had avoided the lower twenty feet which are far the hardest.

Georges again advanced. Now it was extremely difficult for about ten feet. This difficulty was because the first part of the Final Crack overhung dreadfully. When Sherry and Georges were safely on top, I struggled and struggled to get above that overhanging part. The trouble was that there wasn't anything to begin with. I couldn't jam my leg into the crack and there wasn't anything to hold on to! Finally I got my sneaker caught on a little roughness in the lower part of the fissure. Then I jumped a little,



Bradford Changing into "Rappel"
on the Grand Gendarme.



On the "Vire à Bicyclettes," the
Summit of the Grépon in
the Background.



Can He Do It?

LE GRAND DIABLE

caught a handhold way above me, and swung out into the air.

After fearful stretchings of my left leg, I just managed to get it back into the crack above the overhang. From there to the top was a snap, and for about twenty exciting seconds I raced up the last few feet, all nervous with a desire to get to the summit. I saw a little statue of the Virgin to my right and Georges was just ahead. Then I reached out, and with a good handhold pulled myself to the summit of the Grépon.

The summit is quite as large as the platform at the base of the North Peak. At one end of it there is a statue of the Virgin about four feet high. It is all made of aluminum and weighs upwards of one hundred and fifty pounds. Tairraz had helped five other guides and a priest when they brought the statue to the summit last spring. It was carried in three sections and then bolted together on top, where it is cemented to the rock.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

I am not going much into the view we saw from that airy perch, except for saying that it was much like being in an aeroplane! The glaciers surrounded us on all sides, shining and glistening in the sunlight, which poured through holes in the clouds, as they raced by just above us. And Mont Blanc towered in a great mass of snow only a few miles away.

My sneakers were no longer of any use, as all that we had to do from now on was to descend. So I changed to my boots and put the sneakers away in my little knapsack. Then Georges, Antoine, Sherry and I all posed for a picture beside the Virgin.

After Tairraz had taken the picture, Georges got a pineapple out of his sack and divided it equally between us. I threw mine away after one bite and watched it bounce down the cliff to the Glacier des Nantillons. Mother was watching us from the valley at that moment (through the telescope) and

LE GRAND DIABLE

remarked when I returned that she had seen me throw something away! Imagine her being able, at a distance of about two miles, to follow our climb in such detail.

After Antoine had finished his pineapple he fixed the rappel rope anew, in a ring that somebody had left over a rock on the summit. He descended and was out of sight in a second, swallowed up in an ocean of fog which was swirling up the Mer de Glace face of the mountain.

The summit, however, was free of clouds and we were in the bright sunlight. That is a trick which the wind often plays—one side of the mountain all black clouds, the summit and the other side in bright sun and clear weather!

Tairraz handed back my Graflex camera with which he had taken a picture of the group on top. He had also taken a picture of us all eating pineapples. But, to my horror I found that he had forgotten to change the

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film. Both the pictures had been taken on the same film and had been ruined!

There was *one* more picture in my camera and with a very nervous hand I prepared it for a picture of Georges, Sherry and me beside the Virgin. Clouds were now swirling up on both sides like devouring, foamy waves. We would have to hurry, for the sun would soon be gone.

Tairraz grabbed the camera and we all sat down. Just as he snapped us, a rift in the clouds disclosed the snowfields of the Glacier du Géant in the distance and the sun came out. Then the mist closed in and the film was used up! What luck!

As usual Sherry disappeared right after Tairraz. Then I turned around and let myself off backward into the mist. The clouds were so thick that I could barely see the tiny spot on which to stand a few feet below the summit. I waited there until Sherry had finished with the rappel rope. Then I ar-



On Top, Beside the Virgin.



Changing Shoes on Top of the Grépon.

LE GRAND DIABLE

ranged myself on it, and began the descent of the crack known as the Cheminée Knubel, the most difficult spot on the whole Grépon—to climb *up*. Luckily, I was going down it!

I certainly can't see how anyone ever got up that fissure. The upper part was all right, but just below the top I simply swung out into the air, hanging on the rope, and descended that way for nearly ten feet. Then I landed on firm rock once more and slipped quickly to a flat platform where Sherry was. There was now no more rappel-rope, so I untwisted myself and called up to Georges that it was his turn.

At the platform I changed places on the rope with Sherry and went first, since I had been there before and knew the way. By way of a big crack in the ridge, called the Brèche Balfour (Balfour Notch), we crossed onto the Nantillons side once more. We sat there in the notch for nearly ten minutes, with a rousing good wind blowing and clouds

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racing by, while Georges pulled down the rappel-rope and slung it over his shoulder.

It was so cold and cloudy that we descended very fast from there on, the going being rather easy over heaps of big rocks. We only stopped once for a picture, when the clouds lifted for a moment and the sun came out.

A little lower down, we placed another rappel and descended in that way over some big flat rocks with no handholds in them. That brought us to the edge of a little chasm on the other side of which was a wide platform.

The only way to cross the hole is by means of a big rock that fell from far above years ago, and jammed itself into the hole like a bridge. You slide across this, lying on your stomach with a hand and leg on each side, much like the first part of the Grand Gen-darme.

The platform is called the "Plate-forme du C. P.," because the initials of two guides, Charlet and Payot, were found there carved

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in the rock. They were the first two men to reach that spot.

I went first. There is a single little trick to get onto that big bridge of stone. You have to reach around a corner with your right hand and get hold of a rock that you cannot see. It's very scary to do, but the moment that you've got the hold you're all right.

I remembered it from the time before, and arranged my feet so that I could reach a long way without losing my balance. Once I was arranged, I fell gently forward around the corner, and, reaching forward, landed on the handhold. Then I swung myself onto the bridge and waited there to see to Sherry's rope. As he advanced Tairraz snapped a picture of him catching the tricky handhold.

At last Sherry was around, and we slipped one after another across the bridge and pulled ourselves onto the platform. The Grépon was almost over.

There we had a little late afternoon tea

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composed of no tea, no toast, a little bread and some honey. Then we crossed the platform and after some hundred feet of easy broken-up rocks we reached the Glacier des Nantillons once more. However, we were now way up at the top of the glacier, and had a quarter-mile of walking before getting our ice-axes at the foot of the Couloir Charmoz-Grépon.

There the fun began. The surface of the glacier had been melted soft during the earlier part of the day. But there was a layer of glare ice about four inches below the surface. The snow on top made the ice even more slippery than usual, because it wet it and kept the nails on our boots from catching.

We must have gone at least thirty miles an hour as we slid downwards, with a perfect sheet of snow shooting up after each of us like the wake of a motor boat! In ten minutes we came down the quarter mile to the Couloir Charmoz-Grépon. There we stopped long



"Passage du C. P." Sherry Getting the Tricky Handhold, Bradford Sliding
Across the Rock Bridge.

LE GRAND DIABLE

enough to take up our ice-axes which we had left there in the morning, and in a moment we were off once more.

In my opinion the hardest part of the whole day was racing down past the dangerous walls of ice. Every pinnacle was just on the verge of falling. The slope was not quite steep enough to slide down, so we had to run at top speed for a good two hundred yards, falling down and picking ourselves up, and twisting our ankles in little crevasses hidden under the snow. At last we were safely by the séracs, and, using our ice-axes as brakes, we slid down the final ice-slope to the Rognon.

There we had a good supper of chicken and jam and honey and bread. In fact, we ate *everything* that we had left there on the way up and were all hungry when we had finished.

The climb was now over except for the weary couple of hours of path which led through the semi-darkness to Montenvers, a mountain hotel on the way to Chamonix.

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We would have to spend the night there because it was six o'clock, and already far too late to go down to Chamonix by one of the little cog-wheel trains which run from Montenvers all day.

The expedition had been a success. We had taken eight hundred feet of moving pictures besides countless dozens of others. Every one was satisfied and we all descended with light hearts.

But there is one thing to remember about that trip; one that always sticks in my mind. If you look at our pictures of the Grépon and don't find them as good as you think they should be, just think of the job it was to take them!

Half the time, a photographer is in more danger on the mountains than the climber himself, because he has to use both hands on the camera and yet stand firm in risky positions, perched midway between heaven and earth.

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Besides all these difficulties the trouble of good light comes up. For ideal pictures on the Grépon you've got to have an early morning sun for the Mummery Crack, a late afternoon sun for the Rateau de Chèvre, midday for the North Summit, early afternoon on the Grand Gendarme, very early morning for the Vire à Bicyclettes, and finally mid-afternoon for the cracks which lead to the summit. Now, do you wonder it's a job to photograph the Grépon—in one day?





CHAPTER VII

A TRAGEDY ON THE HEIGHTS

ZERMATT is a little village about sixty miles northeast of Chamonix, just on the border between Switzerland and Italy. Around Zermatt lie a group of the most majestic mountains in all Europe. The peaks about Chamonix and in the chain of Mont Blanc are terrific, but don't even compare in majestic grandeur to those heaped about Zermatt.

Chamonix is perhaps better for climbing, because the rock of which the mountains

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there are made is far stronger and less brittle than that in the vicinity of Zermatt. For that reason you feel a lot safer while climbing at Chamonix, and that's why I've been there twice and to Zermatt only once.

The town of Zermatt is still the way it looked many years ago. Only a tiny little cog-wheel railway comes up the Zermatt valley, and there is no auto road leading to the little town. In fact, there is not a single automobile in the whole town! It is an alpine village unspoiled by the average type of tourists, a difficult spot to find in Switzerland.

I made my visit to Zermatt in August of 1926 with one sole idea in my mind—to climb the Matterhorn—without doubt the most formidable-looking peak in all Europe.

It was a climb that I shall never forget as long as I live, for it brought back to me memories of the stories that I had read so many times about the mountain. About the Matterhorn and upon its tremendous crags have

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taken place more fatal accidents than on any other mountain in the Alps!

Although Zermatt stays much the same as of old, the mountains have changed. In July, 1865, an Englishman, Edward Whymper by name, came there and in no less than three days he had conquered the so-called "invincible" Matterhorn with two guides, a porter and three English friends. But the Matterhorn was dissatisfied with being beaten. On the way down after making their successful climb, Whymper's party was overcome by one of the most horrible accidents that has ever taken place in all the Alps.

It was the Matterhorn's revenge!

My ascent of the Matterhorn was far from interesting from the climber's point of view; much less so from that of a reader! The mountain is but a series of big steps—a regular old staircase. And right below the top where it begins to get difficult, and where it would be interesting without help, the Alpine

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Clubs have gone and placed a lot of fixed ropes, which stay there all the year round for novices to pull themselves up on! It's not right. The Matterhorn should be left as are all the other mountains of the world, unhampered with fixed cords, for the climber to use his own skill. If he isn't skilled enough to climb the peak without pulling himself on a rope another man has climbed and fixed—why, he is not the man to try the Matterhorn. He doesn't deserve it.

That's not the type of climb that it's worth writing about or even telling about. This chapter is to be devoted to Edward Whymper's ascent of the Matterhorn—a feat of pure alpinism—a tale without which no book on the Alps is complete. It may be a terrible story, but it goes to show that the mountains are not always so gentle as they look. Sometimes the mountains seem to live. The Matterhorn was alive on July the fourteenth, 1865.

As you see it from Zermatt the Matter-

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horn is in the form of a very steep pyramid. You can see two great sides or faces, and a ridge which runs down between these faces towards the valley.

Before his final attempt on the Matterhorn in 1865, Whymper had studied the mountain from every possible angle, from a distance and from close up. In fact, he had already made seven unsuccessful attempts to reach its summit. He had discovered one very important fact during his studying. The ridge that runs from the summit towards Zermatt is not nearly so steep as it looks from the valley. The eye "foreshortens" that ridge and makes it look almost vertical, whereas it is inclined at only an angle of forty-five degrees!

Whymper arrived at Breuil, the little town at the foot of the Italian side of the Matterhorn on the seventh of July, 1865. He found there that the two guides whom he had engaged for the trip up the Matterhorn that he



The Matterhorn Showing the Route Up It.

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proposed to make were both off with other climbers! That put his hopes to the winds. When he decided to cross over the mountains to Zermatt he found that there wasn't a single guide or porter in town who was willing to make the trip with him. They were all hard at work making cheese!

He went up and down the valley vainly searching for someone to aid him in transporting all his stuff over to Zermatt. One afternoon he met a young Englishman, Lord Francis Douglas by name, who was descending to Breuil. He had crossed over from Zermatt that very day and planned to go back on the morrow. As he had a guide and a porter he offered his services to Whymper. Whymper accepted the offer and the next day found the four of them in Zermatt together.

Douglas' guide turned out to be a great friend and guide of Whymper who came from Chamonix. By the time that they were all at Zermatt they were good friends, and had

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agreed to climb the Matterhorn together if they could find another guide and porter to go with them. At Zermatt they found another Englishman with a friend who were both desirous to climb the mountain. These two were the Rev. Charles Hudson and a Mr. Hadow. Hudson and Douglas as well as Whymper were all well-trained in climbing, but Mr. Hadow was not quite so skilled as the rest.

The day that Whymper had left Breuil he discovered that a party of seven Italians had left the village to attempt the Matterhorn from that side. That was now three days before, and if Whymper's caravan wished to be successful in making the *first* ascent of the mountain they would have to get going fast.

So the very next morning which was the thirteenth of July they all started out from Zermatt at five o'clock. Their party was composed of Peter Taugwalder and Michael Croz who were the guides. Taugwalder's two sons were porters, and the other members of

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the expedition were Lord Douglas, Hudson, Hadow and Whymper.

The day was a perfect gem. A balmy, cloudless one, not too hot but not cold. In fact it was just satisfactory. They climbed speedily upwards over the well-worn path to the little chapel at the plateau called the Schwarzsee, three thousand feet above Zermatt. Whymper had left all his equipment there while en route from Breuil to Zermatt, and they picked it all up, placing it on the backs of the Taugwalder boys.

Zermatt has an altitude of about five thousand feet. At noon the party had reached a height of about eleven thousand feet at the base of the great ridge of the Matterhorn up which they proposed to make the climb. This spot where they pitched their tent is the place where there is a little hotel now. It was there where I spent the night before climbing the mountain last summer.

Since it was still early in the day, Croz and

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one of the Taugwalder youths started up the face of the mountain in order to find a route of ascent. Thus they would save a great deal of time for the next day. The rest of them stayed near the tent during the afternoon and sketched the views or collected various specimens of rocks. Late in the day Croz returned with young Peter Taugwalder and announced that the mountain was a snap. They said that they could have climbed to the summit and returned before midnight!

That was great news and it was received hilariously by the crowd at the tent. That evening there was a beautiful sunset which promised well for the next day. And all the evening the crags of the Matterhorn echoed the songs of the guides and the laughter of the group as they chatted about the camp-fire. They had carried wood all the way up from the valley for the fire, since no trees grow any higher than seven or eight thousand feet up.

The next morning saw them off at crack

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of dawn. They took young Peter Taugwalder as a porter and sent his brother to the valley with the tent and any other stuff that was no longer of use. The day dawned clear and cool they made terrific speed as they climbed.

Whympfer describes this route up the mountain as "a huge natural staircase." They continued the ascent at breakneck speed until ten o'clock. They always kept on the face of the peak and a little to the left of the ridge, at whose base they had spent the night, because the climbing was much easier than on the ridge itself, and because of the rotten rock on the crest. But on the face they found that it was more dangerous, for every now and then avalanches raced down it, so they were forced to keep nearly on the ridge all the way up to the shoulder. This is the spot where the fixed ropes now begin, and where they were forced to slow up and take caution.

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The order of ascent was changed there on a snow-bank. Croz took the lead, Whymper came next, Mr. Hudson was third, then came Hadow, old Peter and finally young Peter. When everybody was roped up and ready they started off. Croz then made the remark, "Now for something altogether different!" He was right. The rocks above the shoulder are very treacherous on account of their thick covering of smooth ice deposited there by the clouds.

The party moved slowly upwards, foot by foot, till nearly all the difficult part was over. Then they crossed a rather ticklish little patch of steep rocks which led to a snow-slope. That slope ran unbroken for two hundred feet to the top of the mountain. The Matterhorn was theirs! Croz and Whymper unroped and ran for all they were worth to the top. The race ended in a dead heat!

There were no tracks at all on the summit, and no signs whatsoever were visible to prove



The Author's Zermatt Guide on the Shoulder of the Matterhorn.

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that the Italians had got there before them. In a few moments Whymper discovered them a thousand feet below crossing a little patch of snow. They yelled their heads off but could get no response. They *must* get them to hear or otherwise they would have no good witnesses of their ascent. Whymper rolled off some big stones and the others followed his example. At last the Italians heard—and saw, too!

They turned right around and began to run and did not stop until they were all the way to Breuil once more. There they told an exciting story of how the gods of the mountain had hurled stones off from the top of the Matterhorn upon them.

The summit of the Matterhorn is the best part of the whole climb, for on account of the arrangement of the slopes and cliffs you cannot see a bit of the lower part of the mountain! I have shown this in my little sketch below. So when you look from the summit

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all that you see is a forty-degree snow-slope running off into the air, and then the valley far below. It's quite a queer sensation.



THE ARROWS REPRESENT THE WAY YOUR EYES CANNOT SEE
THE LOWER RIDGES

The successful mountaineers spent one eventful hour on the top and then started back again. They had placed one of the

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tent-poles with Croz's shirt tied to it as a signal of their conquest, in the very highest snow-bank of the peak. But as they had neglected to put their names in a bottle, Whymper stayed a little longer than the others to arrange a list for that purpose.

When all was finished Whymper and young Peter raced downwards catching up with the others just above the difficult part. Here Lord Douglas asked Whymper to rope up to old Peter in order to make them more secure in case of a fall. This was soon effected and they began the descent once more.

Croz went first, Hadow second, Hudson third, Lord Douglas fourth, then came old Peter, Whymper and young Peter.

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"A few minutes later a sharp-eyed lad ran into the Monte Rosa hotel in Zermatt, saying that he had seen an avalanche fall from the summit of the Matterhorn onto the Matterhorn-glacier. The boy was reproved for

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telling idle stories; he was right, however, and this was what he saw."

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Croz came to a difficult spot shortly after Whympers had joined the rest of the party, and after he had cut some large steps he began aiding Mr. Hadow as he placed his feet in them. Whympers was hidden from the following scene so what happened will never be known accurately. But the first thing that he knew was that he saw Hadow's shoulders sway and go out of sight. At the same moment Croz gave a startled exclamation and he also disappeared. Then Hudson and Douglas were dragged from their feet by the jerking of the rope.

Taugwalder, Whympers and young Peter held firm. It was the supreme test. Could they hold the four men? Yes, but—there was a sharp snap, the rope parted between Douglas and old Peter Taugwalder. The

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four men, lying on their backs, raced headlong down the slope of ice and rocks and disappeared, one by one, over the cliff of four thousand feet which drops to the Matterhorn-glacier. They were lost!

For a half-hour all that the Taugwalders could do was to weep and moan. They had lost all their senses so great was their grief. They would neither go up nor down. They wailed incessantly, "We are lost, we are lost!" Whymper could do nothing with them for nearly an hour. Then they descended, shaking in every limb, and, as Whymper describes, old Peter would turn about every now and then and would mutter with an ashen face, "I cannot, *I cannot*." Heaven only knows how that brave Englishman ever guided his guides to the base of that mighty peak. But he did it, and at six in the evening, three hours after the accident, they reached the site of their tent. There they gathered the few things that they and their lost compan-

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ions had owned into a bundle and started for Zermatt.

The difficulties were over, but not the excitement or the horror. None but the words of Whympers himself can describe the next few moments.

“At about six P.M. we arrived at the snow upon the ridge descending towards Zermatt, and all peril was over. We frequently looked, but in vain, for traces of our unfortunate comrades; we bent over the ridge and cried to them, but no sound returned. Convinced at last that they were neither within sight nor hearing we ceased from our useless efforts; and, too cast down for speech, silently gathered up our things and the little effects of those that were lost, preparatory to continuing the descent. When, Lo! a mighty arch appeared, rising above the Lyskamm (a neighboring peak), high into the sky. Pale, colorless, and noiseless, but perfectly sharp and defined, except where it was lost in the clouds, this unearthly apparition seemed like

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a vision from another world; and, almost appalled, we watched with amazement the gradual development of two vast crosses, one on either side. If the Taugwalders had not been the first to perceive it, I should have doubted my senses. They thought it had



some connection with the accident, and I, after a while, that it might bear some relation to ourselves. But our movements had no effect upon it. The spectral forms remained motionless. It was a fearful and wonderful sight; unique in my experience, and impressive beyond description, coming at such a moment."

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The Taugwalders lay with their faces covered until this horrible vision had vanished. It was like a summons to them from the world beyond. It seemed as though the Heavens had been opened to them by their dead companions, who beckoned for them to follow.

It finally faded away into the evening and the darkness. Then only did they uncover their eyes and descend on the run, after the never-tiring Whymper. They were forced to spend the night a little above Zermatt in the woods under a sheltering rock. Early in the morning they were off once more and reached Zermatt a few hours later.

They walked silently through the streets to the Monte Rosa hotel. There they stopped. The proprietor, a Mr. Seiler, came out to meet them and give them congratulations on their success. He looked Whymper in the face, then his look of joy faded out. "The Taugwalders and I have returned," was

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the reply to the silent question. Seiler burst into tears.

The Matterhorn was conquered but it had cost dearly. The spirits of the mountain had taken their toll!





CHAPTER VIII

THE LOWER SLOPES OF MONT BLANC

ALL summer Sherry and I postponed the ascent of Mont Blanc, because we wanted to be in the very best of physical condition when we did it. I also wanted to get pictures of the ascent for this book. These I had been unable to get last year when I climbed it, on account of the severe cold which we encountered on the last ridge.

The climb in itself is really not a very difficult one. Of course, it is not at all like the Grépon or any of the rock climbs. As a mat-

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ter of fact, you do not lay your foot on a bit of rock all the way up the last half of Mont Blanc, except for the little heap of stones at the Grands Mulets where you spend the night.

It's all snow; just oceans and oceans of it, billowing upwards in extremely steep slopes. The lower slopes are full of crevasses, while the upper ones which run right to the summit are always smooth. The crevasses in the upper slopes, if ever they do form, are instantly filled up with the new snow which falls there constantly all the year round.

Mont Blanc was postponed so many times that we finally saw that we might not be able to climb it at all! The weather got continually worse and worse. We all sat in the valley and ate ice cream and had afternoon tea. We couldn't do any climbing at all.

So much snow fell during the rainstorms we had in the valley that the Grépon (when it appeared for a few moments one day) looked like a snow-peak. It was just plas-

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tered with sticky white snow from top to bottom, and so were all the rest of the Aiguilles. Georges said that, except for the lack of snow in the valley, it was just like winter.

After this continual bad weather had been going for over a week, a bright idea struck Georges and me while in consultation. Mont Blanc would be utterly impossible on foot for the next week, even if we were to have four successive days of good weather, on account of the tremendous amount of new snow that had fallen. Why not try the climb *on skis*? That would certainly be a grand novelty in the early part of August. And to have a ski trip in the middle of summer would be positively thrilling.

Of course I didn't have any skis, and neither did Sherry. But Sherry claimed that he hadn't skied enough to try such a difficult trip, and that he would plan to do it on snow-shoes.



Georges and Bradford Give Cachat a Hand in the Jonction.

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Our plans were made very swiftly. Georges and I went over to a regular factory where they made skis and sleds. There we got two wonderful light pairs of skis—one for me, and another to bring back to a friend in America. At the same time, Sherry went off with Antoine to another store and got a pair of French snow-shoes. They were the funniest looking snow-shoes that I have ever seen. Instead of being made of gut or rawhide they were strung with twine. Nevertheless, they were the only things that he could get and they would have to do.

It was raining hard when we got the snow-shoes, but, like magic, the next day dawned clear as crystal. Every cloud had cleared away and a north wind was blowing. That is a sure sign of good weather at Chamonix. But with a north wind it is always cold. You can't very often get a good clear day that is warm.

We got up good and early and telephoned

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Georges and Antoine to come down as soon as they could, with all the stuff they needed for Mont Blanc. I went out and bought an extra muffler and some special, rubber-lined, windproof gloves for skiing. Then I got some mittens to put inside the rubber gloves and returned to the hotel to get my mountain clothes on.

I had got my boots all greased and on when the guides arrived. We ordered provisions for two days from the hotel—chicken and honey, bread, sardines, cold meats and chocolate. Then, when it was all packed into the sacks, we said goodbye to everyone and set off.

I have marked out on the picture just the routes that I've followed up Mont Blanc the two times that I have been on it. Last year I had to walk for eight hours, all the way from the valley to the Grands Mulets, where you spend the night. This year we took the aerial railway, which had just been completed,

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and walked only an hour and three-quarters across the Glacier des Bossons to the same place!

What's more, the aerial railway saves a lot of your strength, and on Mont Blanc strength and endurance are what you need. You don't need to have any skill to get to the top of that heap of ice and snow! That's why we waited so long before doing it—so that we would be just as strong as possible and in the very best of condition for the climb.

We made quite a hit, going through the centre of Chamonix with skis on our shoulders, as the August sun baked down! But all the guides admitted that that was the only way to get to the top of Mont Blanc. The soft, new snow, they said, was at least two feet deep. To climb the mountain without skis or snow-shoes we'd have had to wade along through the snow deeper than our knees.

The same aerial railway that had taken us up the day before we had climbed the Grépon,

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again lifted us from the valley to a height of over eight thousand feet. That is vertically a little over a mile above Chamonix and it took only twenty-five minutes.

When we reached the Station des Glaciers at the top of the line, we shouldered our skis and began to cross the Glacier des Bossons towards the Grands Mulets. The little hut called the Grands Mulets is placed on a tiny island of rock, square in the middle of the icy sea of the Glacier des Bossons. It is ten thousand feet high, and thus it leaves about five and a half thousand feet of climbing for the second day.

The Glacier des Bossons is exceptionally interesting. It isn't like the Mer de Glace with its smooth waves almost free of great séracs and crevasses. The Bossons provides a lot of excitement in the way of crossing crevasses, and even in actually climbing the séracs or pinnacles of ice.

As you can see in the picture, a great tongue

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of land runs way up the side of Mont Blanc between the glaciers of Taconnaz and Bossons. That, by the way, is the route that I followed to the Grands Mulets last year. The old trail leads from the valley the whole way up the tongue and then by the glacier to the hut.

This tongue is the cause for most of the crevasses just below the Grands Mulets. The glacier comes down the mountain slowly but surely in a wide sheet of ice, until it reaches the Grands Mulets Rocks. There it is split in two. Then it joins again, just below the islet, and flows like a vast sea to the top of the tongue of land which is called the Montagne de la Côte. There again it is split in two. This time the two parts continue separately, one being the Glacier des Bossons and the other the Glacier de Taconnaz. That wide field of ice between the Grands Mulets and the Montagne de la Côte is called the Junction, because it is the junction of the

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two great glaciers, and also the icefield which has been split in two by the Grands Mulets Rocks.

This splitting-up makes the ice get all mixed up, and piled around into huge heaps which at some seasons are almost unpassable. Those of you who have read *David Goes to Greenland* must know what "pack ice" is. The Junction is like a large field of that pack ice.

Last year when I climbed Mont Blanc it had been a very cold summer, and the crevasses of the Junction were nearly all filled in with snow. But this year you should have seen them! You couldn't see one way or the other the ice was piled up so high.

We didn't use rope for the first part of the glacier, but when we reached the Junction we put it on for safety.

This year we had the same porter that I had last year for the ascent of Mont Blanc. His name was Georges Cachat. It's always neces-

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sary to have a porter on that climb because it's so long and fatiguing for anyone under twenty-five years old, that it is good to go without anything on your back at all.

As I was saying, we put on the rope and began to cross the Junction. Georges, Cachat and I were on one rope. That one went first, and I was tied in the middle. Sherry and Antoine were on another, and went behind us to take photographs.

We crossed crevasse after crevasse, always using the same method for safety, although the guides were somewhat bothered by their load of skis. I stood still and held Georges' rope as he tested the snow with his ice-axe and then advanced to the other side across the snow bridge. Then, when he was safely fixed, both he and Cachat saw to my rope as I crossed. Finally I took care of Cachat's as he crossed.

That is about the safest way (it is the safest way) to cross a crevasse, and that's the way

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that we always did it. Because if anyone slips while going over there is always somebody with a good footing to help him get out of the hole.

The snow bridges were really terribly scary. In some places I actually had to sit down astride them, because they were too narrow for my feet and, usually, too weak to walk on. Once seated firmly, I pushed myself forward with my hands, letting each leg dangle into the crevasse on one side of the narrow bridge.

Some of these holes dropped away through the darkness for more than a hundred feet into the depths of the glacier. Others were only a few feet deep. The ice in these cracks was a wonderful, light bluish-green color near the surface. This melted darker and darker as the crevasses got deeper, till it faded away entirely to the inky blackness which led to the bottom. There were lots of crevasses whose bottoms were so far down



A Huge Crevasse below the Grands Mulets.



At the Grands Mulets: Georges, Sherry, Bradford, Cachat, Antoine.

LOWER SLOPES OF MONT BLANC

that the darkness made them impossible to see!

Last year in that very spot I saw a German climber fall into one of those awful holes. He tried to cross a snow bridge too fast and it broke in two where he stepped on it. Down he went into the crevasse, yelling wildly and grabbing at the slippery ice with his hands! Luckily the crevasse was only about ten feet deep. That is, the place where he landed was that deep, but about two feet from the little platform where he stopped the hole dropped away for nearly forty feet! In an instant the two other men on his rope caught him up tight. Then they lowered him to the little platform and let him rest from the shock there. When he was all right once more, my guide and porter, together with his guides pulled him out like a bag of meal! When they did it I got onto a nearby slab of ice and got two wonderful pictures of them dragging the poor fellow out.

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

A little bit above the Junction there were two enormous crevasses which were so wide that we couldn't have ever got across them without the ladders that we found there. The men who carry the provisions from the Station des Glaciers to the Grands Mulets put them there so as to make it easier for them with their heavy packs.

Above the second ladder we took off the rope. From there a short walk up over a wonderful, smooth snowfield brought us to the Grands Mulets. One hour and forty minutes' easy walk (except for the Junction!) this year, compared with the seven and one half gruelling hours that I had last summer! I blessed the man who had put up the aerial railway.

The first place to which I went when we arrived at the cabin was the little room where I spent the night last year. There, on the wall behind the bed, was the following inscription in neat pencilled letters:

LOWER SLOPES OF MONT BLANC

H. B. Washburn, Jr.,
August 6, 1926——Climbed Mont Blanc
from Chamonix.

If "fools' names always appear in public places" everybody that ever went to the Grands Mulets is a fool! The wall is simply black with names that climbers have pencilled on, just as they go to bed the night before making the climb.

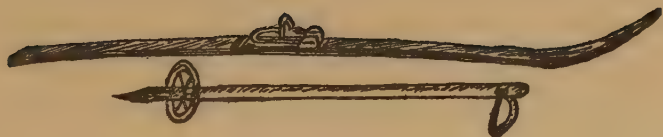
We had a still better supper than the one that I had there last year, because of the fact, I suppose, that the men who lug up the food have to walk so much shorter a distance on account of the aerial road. That aerial road has simplified the packers' work from four miles steep uphill walking, to a walk of one mile on the level and a half-mile uphill! It has made some difference to those men, all right.

I toasted some of our buns on the stove and then ate them with the honey that

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

Cachat had lugged up for us. I lived on this instead of the cast-iron steak that Sherry and a couple of other mountaineers seemed to eat with relish. I can't see how anyone can chew for fifteen minutes on an old dried-up piece of beef, half the size of a pencil, and then claim to have got more nourishment out of it than a good combination of butter, honey and toast! I can't understand.





CHAPTER IX

SKIING ABOUT THE ROOF OF EUROPE

I THINK that that night at the Grands Mulets was the coldest that I have ever had. I had to keep on all my clothes, together with a special, fur-lined Eskimo hood in order to be *half* warm enough to sleep.

The wind howled and whistled about that little hut, and way down deep in my mind I was absolutely sure that we wouldn't get to the top of Mont Blanc the next day. When I'd climbed before there hadn't been any wind at all at the hut, and even then, on the final ridge, we'd found a good little breeze blowing. It had been so cold that Cachat had frozen his hand!

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

What would it be up there with this wind? Besides, last year it was warm when we started from the cabin.

In the midst of one of my many naps I was awakened. The hour had come. It was quarter of two in the morning and was time to get up. As I didn't have any clothes *off*, it didn't take me a very long time to dress. Sherry, for the same reason, was equally speedy, and we went to the kitchen together. There we prepared our breakfast of toast, honey and malted milk. That was the first time I had ever drunk malted milk on a mountain, and it certainly was the best tasting drink that I had ever had for a mountain breakfast.

You know that you must be very careful what you eat when you climb, as you are using your body to the very last bit, and it always must have the right kind of fuel to keep it going. Before this summer, I never have been able to find anything to drink that

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

would taste right at a breakfast, eaten just after midnight. But, after that one drink of malted milk I have never drunk anything else!

Our breakfast was soon finished and we made our way into the guides' room to see how they were coming on. One flickering candle was the only thing that lighted up their large room. They were almost ready, too. I got some of my camera supplies from Georges and asked his opinion on the weather. He said that it was too warm to be a good day!

When I protested, he took me outside. Sure enough, he was right. The wind that had been so cold all night, had swung around into the south and was now very warm. Besides, the moon had a big white ring around it. Nevertheless, he said that we had best go as far as the Grand Plateau and see there what the weather would be. You remember, of course, from the second chapter where the Grand Plateau is—right below the summit of

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

Mont Blanc. It is the halfway mark from the Grands Mulets to the top, even though it is nearly two-thirds of the way up in altitude. This is because, above the plateau, the route you follow is so crooked it makes it lots longer.

We were all ready by two-thirty, and taking our skis, we descended the little heap of rocks before the hut, to the edge of the glacier and the snowfields.

The guides had skied up for nearly a mile, during our supper, the evening before. They had worn a wonderful path in the snow, and we followed this, not yet bothering to put on our skis, because the walking was so much quicker without them. Sherry, however, did put on his snow-shoes, for they were small and light, and it didn't make much difference to him whether they were off or on. We carried the skis strapped together on our right shoulders.

The silence was so deep that I could almost

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hear it. The only noise that I could make out was the steady crunch, crunch, crunch of Georges' shoes in the snow, and the occasional rumble of the glacier as it slowly moved downwards. A glacier's rumble is much like the roar of distant thunder, and is very spooky as it echoes and re-echoes among the mountains.

The wind had all gone down, and, as we trudged upward, it grew warmer every minute. It was either a sure sign of stormy weather or of heavy winds after sunrise.

Two Germans and their guides, who were climbing right behind us, turned and went back to the Grand Mulets. They said that they had had enough of the old mountain already, and knew that they couldn't get to the top if they kept on. But we all agreed to push ahead and take the chances on the weather, so as not to lose a good day if it should turn out that way.

Forty minutes' dreary tramping (Mont

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

Blanc is all a dreary tramp, except for the last few hundred yards) brought us to the end of the tracks which the guides had made the night before. There we stopped and put on our skis. Without them we sank into the snow well above our knees.

This was the first time that any of us had worn skis for nearly six months, and, except for Georges, we were all pretty clumsy on them at the start. Every movement that he made was graceful, and you could have seen in a moment that he was a born ski champion (he is champion of the world in one of the long distance ski events!).

The snow was very soft and powdery, so we had to make long zigzags to keep from slipping backwards as we went up. Even with the zigzags, almost all my weight came on the ski-poles in my hands. My arms were the first part of my body to get tired from this new exercise.

We had scarcely put on our skis when we



Bradford and Georges Crossing the Ladder
Below the Grands Mulets.



Passing Through the Séracs of the Junction.

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came to a huge, black, yawning cavern with a ladder over it. They had to be all undone and taken off so that we could climb the ladder. And then we had to put them on again above it. It was an awful bother just to cross a gap ten feet wide.

The upper "lip" of this crevasse was so much higher than the lower one, that the guides said it would be safe to jump it with skis on the way down. I formed my opinion at once—NOT FOR ME! A little later, the rest decided likewise.

The climb was, for me, much like that of a year ago. Georges went ahead with a lantern and Cachat was behind me; then came Antoine and Sherry. There was always the thump, thump of Georges ahead and Cachat behind, and always the flicker of the lantern on the snow. We climbed for so long like that that I nearly fell asleep with the monotony of it.

An hour above the ladder we came to the

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

edge of what is called the "Petit Plateau," a great plain of flat snow, lying just below the Grand Plateau. Just below the plateau the snow was very hard, because the wind had swept off the new-fallen, soft snow. Also it was so steep that we could not make any zigzags, and we had to "side-step" for a couple of hundred feet. Side-stepping is going up sideways. You first lift one ski and then you lift the other one up beside it. Then, if you do it all over again, and keep it up until you nearly fall in a heap, you go two hundred feet!

Those two hundred feet were absolutely the most tiring part of the whole trip, because we had to use exactly the same muscles over and over again, till they were just plain worn out.

We crossed the Petit Plateau at a good stiff pace. Then, after zigzagging up another slope we reached the Grand Plateau, where we stopped to rest for a moment.

Georges had extinguished the lantern on the

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

Petit Plateau and put it in his sack, for, from there on, we had had light enough to see our way. Now it was really light and the sun had just risen.

Down below in the valley of Chamonix the lights twinkled brightly, since it was still only four in the morning. As far as I could see, everything was a gorgeous red. It was just like the sunrise I had had on the Grand Plateau a year before and I just revelled in it.

The evening mists still surged around in the valley and, far to the south, a heavy bank of black clouds could be seen, slowly advancing toward us. All the signs pointed to bad weather—especially the very red sunrise.

Mont Blanc itself was right ahead of us, and I saw Sherry scanning it with a crestfallen eye. From end to end of the ridge by which we must climb it raced a terrific wind. The new snow, which had lain so peacefully for a couple of days, was whipped into furious

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

eddies by the blast and swirled along at a stupendous speed.

Just then an icy gust struck me full in the face and nearly blew me over with its force. It was the morning wind that we had feared. Mont Blanc would be impossible.

Sherry saw the situation at once and decided that he would return, and not bother to climb any longer, now that the hopes for the summit were all gone. So he and Antoine turned about and started off downwards, disappearing in a few moments over the rim of the Plateau.

Cachat, Georges and I planned to make an attempt to reach the Col du Dôme, the lowest point on the ridge between Mont Blanc and the Dôme du Goûter, in order to get a few pictures of the wind-swept crest of Mont Blanc.

We lingered talking so long that Georges got his whole left foot frost-bitten, and he had to kick it violently for a few minutes to

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

get it so that he could walk on it once more. Then we set off as fast as we could go for the Col du Dôme.

The difference in altitude between the Grand Plateau and the valley was now very definite. I breathed in short quick gasps, and whenever I exerted myself at all, it made me puff and blow terribly. There was very little oxygen in the air, for, as you know, it gets less and less dense as you go upward from sea-level.

The climbing was easy enough in that dreadful, thin air if I advanced very evenly and smoothly, but the moment I made a sudden movement, I had to stop and rest for a minute to get back my strength.

The slope of the Col du Dôme got less and less steep, and finally we emerged on the great ridge which leads unbroken to the summit of Mont Blanc. In good weather conditions, we could have got to the summit in two more tedious hours. But now it was hope-

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

less. Georges' foot was worse instead of better, as he had expected it would be. Now Cachat had got a frozen hand. The wind was crossing the ridge furiously, carrying with it a heavy load of snow. In fact, the snow was blowing around in such thick clouds that it looked like a real snow-storm, although the sky was absolutely blue above our heads!

The wind would whip the snow from the level fields, swirl it into the air, race it up the side of Mont Blanc in a perfect tempest, and then it would cross the ridge and rush out into the air in tremendous white clouds. It was an awe-inspiring sight.

You can look at the picture of Mont Blanc and see where the little shack of the Vallot Refuge is situated. Then you can find the rocks above the Corridor. To give some idea of the speed of that wind, it was racing from the Refuge to those rocks in less than five seconds! No human being could long stand up against *that*.

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

Even where we were, it was so violent that we could actually lean up against it without falling down. Try that yourself some day against a stiff wind, and you'll find that it has to blow nearly seventy miles an hour before you can do it.

In the midst of all that inferno of wind and flying snow, I actually managed to change a film in my camera. And I got some pictures without freezing my hands, while the guides were standing by freezing up tight! It takes a lot to freeze me, but, I must admit that I just go flat on my back when it gets really hot.

I took four pictures and then gave the camera to Cachat to put away in his sack. Just as I was handing it to him, one of my gloves which I had had off while taking the pictures blew right away. Luckily it was, at that moment, a lull between two blasts of wind, and Cachat made one leap with his skis and slid down to it. This pulled the rope around

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

my waist up tight and pitched me on my ear in the soft snow!

I got up and wrung the icy snow off my gloveless hand—it's terrible to get your hand wet in a place as cold as that. Then I turned about and looked at Georges. As usual the little demon (he is a good three inches shorter than I am) was laughing at me. I couldn't see anything funny in it at all. It reminded me of my first time in the Mummery Crack, when I had got my foot stuck and he had pulled me.

His laughing was silenced by an icy gust of wind, which caught me full in the face and nearly bowled me over. The weather was steadily growing worse. Great wreaths of snow were swirling up from the rocks of the Vallot Refuge just above us on the ridge. It was time to go, or we might never go. I thought of the three skiers who had been lost on this ridge last winter, and whose frozen bodies had been found but ten days before!

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

Georges unroped me so fast that I could not explain to him about my glove through the roar of the wind. A swirl of snow lost Cachat to my view for a moment. He was about twenty feet below me, waiting with the glove. I made a little jump turn, and started slipping towards him to get it. Just above him, I struck an icy spot on top of the snow, and away I went a million miles an hour—past Cachat, and down the slope toward the Grand Plateau.

It hadn't seemed steep on the way up, but going down—Whew! The snow seemed to fly before me. I was going with the wind and I served as a sort of a sail for myself as I tore at lightning speed down that half-mile slope.

It was the most difficult snow imaginable to stand up on. Here and there were patches of crust over which I raced like fury. Then I would strike soft snow again, and slow up like a shot. I managed to keep my balance until I had reached the upper edge of the Grand

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

Plateau. I had never gone so fast on skis before, and knew my end was soon in store for me. Zoom—a patch of ice—a patch of snow—THEN. I rose gently into the air in a graceful curve and, after a twenty-foot dive, I landed right on my head in the snow. For what seemed like hours I rolled and rolled, head over heels down the gradual slope of the plateau. It was a wonder that my skis didn't break my ankles and turn them to pulp.

Finally I came to a stop upside down, and up to my hips in the soft snow. The wind was simply terrific. When I managed to extricate myself and straighten up, I found that one of the skis had come loose a little and that I would have to take it off again to adjust it. I took off my one remaining glove for the operation. When it was fixed and on once more, I located Georges through the clouds of flying snow. He was on the lower edge of the plateau, and another sensational slide and spill took me to him.



Georges, Antoine and Cachat Skiing Down Mont Blanc, Returning to the Grands Mulets after "Breaking" the Trail.



The Author at the Grands Mulets.

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

Even the ski champions like Georges and Cachat were spilling. The snow was just wrong for any kind of turn or stop except for those which I had been patronizing. When I reached Georges and got up on my feet again, Cachat was at least a quarter of a mile behind me with my glove in his pocket, and fixing his ski which had come off. My left hand, the gloveless one, was now completely *black* from the wrist to the ends of the fingers. I could no longer feel anything that I touched with it.

That blackness is the first stage of freezing. I was sure of it and was just mad to get my glove. Georges, too, was eager to get started for both his feet were in bad condition. At last Cachat came and I put the glove on. It was full of ice which the wind had blown into it when it fell, but I couldn't feel it at all. By the time I had got it on again, the others had disappeared through the mist of fine snow that was flying through the air. I

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD.

waited for a moment to find them and then started off.

The snow got a little more powdery on the way to the Petit Plateau, and by making long, gentle zigzags with skid stops at their ends, we managed to descend very rapidly. In the soft snow, too, the poles were very handy, as we could use them for brakes by placing them between our legs and sitting on them! This drove the points deep into the snow, and we could stop that way whenever we wanted to.

With bamboo ski-poles this is a very dangerous thing to do, because they are apt to break and hurt you very badly. Luckily we had poles made of little saplings, and they were very strong and safe.

All the way across the Petit Plateau and down the steep slopes to the crevasse with the ladder, the storm of blowing snow raged unceasingly, often getting so thick that I couldn't see either of the guides. If I stopped

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

for a moment to get my breath, the tracks that they had made filled level with the blowing snow. It was a really exciting adventure—a true storm on the highest peak in Europe, and on skis too!

It was an awful job crossing the crevasse with the ladder and putting on our skis again on the other side of it. Now I could see the Grands Mulets between the gusts of wind and snow. The guides were getting slowly farther ahead, but they couldn't go very fast on account of the extremely steep grade, and the large number of crevasses which yawned on all sides of us. I would go tearing down a slope and stop at the very edge of a crevasse. Then a kick turn would start me back on another zigzag, running lengthwise between two more crevasses.

Turn after turn and zigzags by the million brought me to a little rise just above the Grands Mulets. The spot was sheltered by a massive wall of séracs that towered above me,

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

and the storm had at last ceased. Of course, there was a hurricane of wind where I was, but I had got lower than the region of soft snow. The snow here had melted the day before and had frozen into a hard crust, so the wind raced across it harmlessly. But it was now too dangerous to continue on skis, for the little slope that lay between me and the Grands Mulets was all in glare ice. So I took my skis off, and, tying them together again, I shouldered them and started off on the run, steadying myself with a pole in my left hand.

Ten minutes later we were all together before the warm fire at the hut. Georges had had his hand frost-bitten, and Cachat had nearly frozen a hand and one of his feet. My hand had really been the worst of the three injured parts. It had, however, been saved by a miracle. If you have a part of you freezing, queer to say, the only way to stop it is to cover it with snow or ice! The ice

THE ROOF OF EUROPE

that had saved my left hand was what had gotten in my glove when Cachat had fallen while bringing it to me on the Grand Plateau!

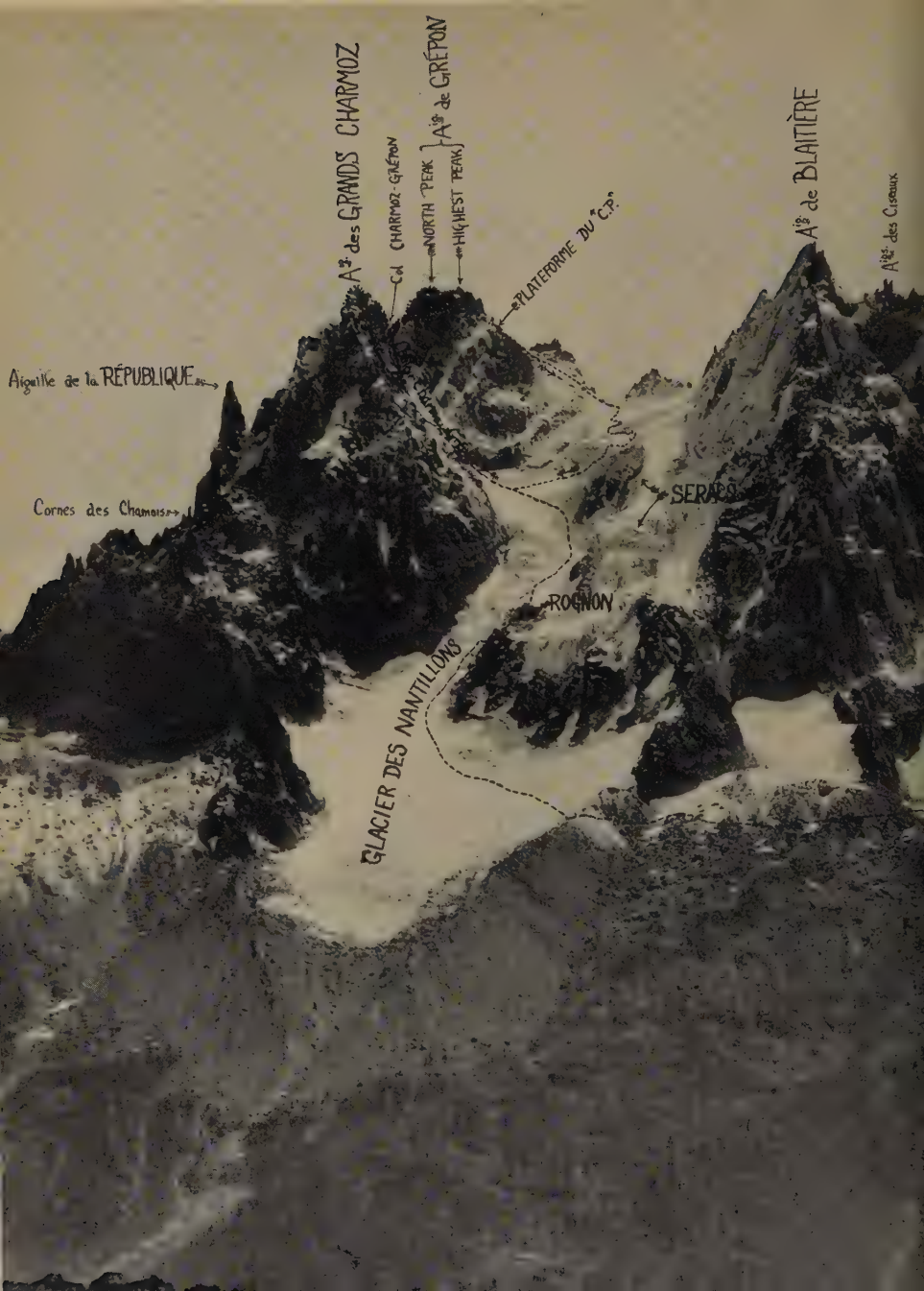
When I was all warm again, I went out and looked at Mont Blanc from a sheltered corner among the rocks behind the hut. The wind was sweeping along the final cone of the mountain at a stupendous rate, probably nearly two hundred miles an hour! Wisps of snow went whirling up into the brilliant blue sky in much the same way that we had seen them from the Col du Dôme but much smaller and less terrible.

There's nothing like the game in which you match yourself against Nature. Give her your very best and fight to the end, but when you see that she has got the upper hand, turn, and don't be scared to admit defeat. It's the fool who sticks to it when it's impossible. A real alpinist always turns when he feels that the time has come—he's praised more, sometimes, for his sense in turning back than

AMONG THE ALPS WITH BRADFORD

when he reaches the top. And, after all, there's nothing like the feeling of knowing that you've done your best, even though you've lost in the struggle!





A² des GRANDS CHAMMOZ

CHAMMOZ-GAËRON

A¹ de GRÉPON

NORTH PEAK
HIGHEST PEAK

PLATEFORME DU C.P.

A¹ de BLAITIÈRE

A¹ de CROUX

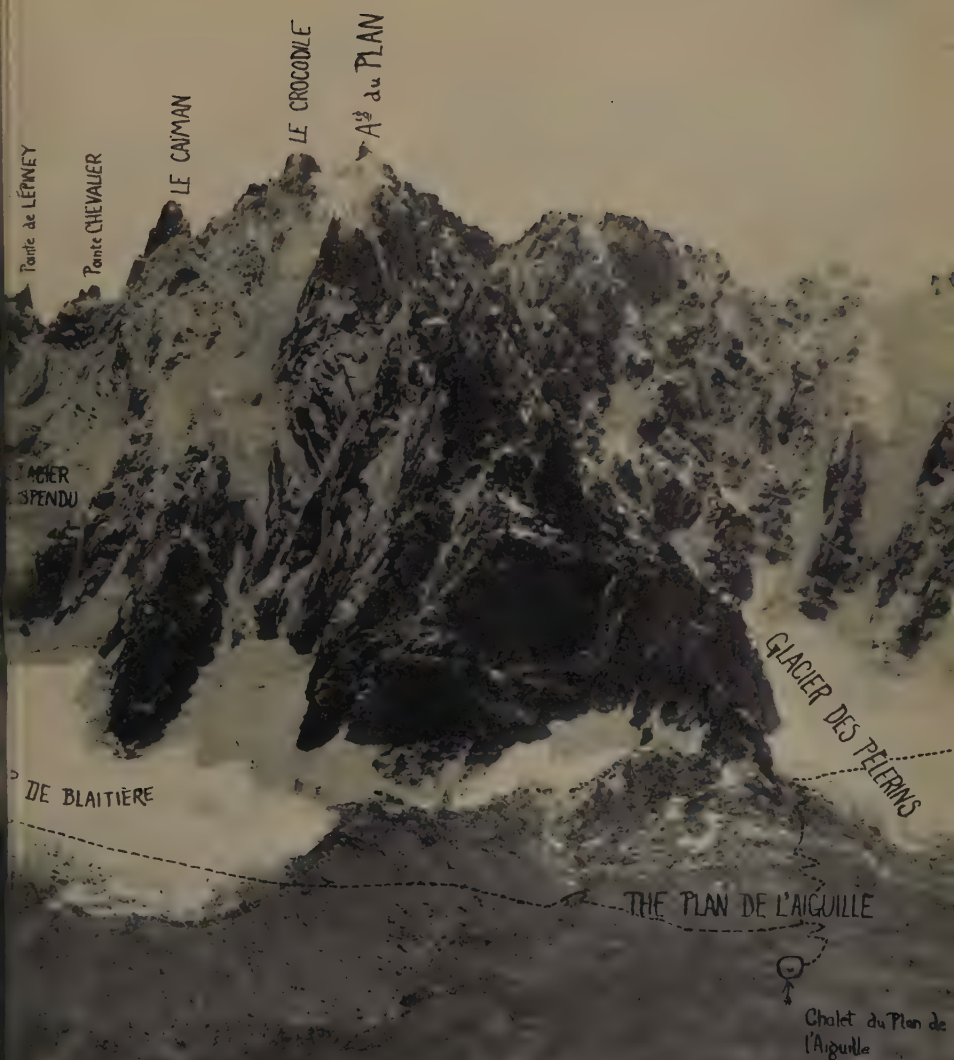
Aiguille de la RÉPUBLIQUE

Cornes des Chammoz

SERAPS

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Deric, of Mesa Verde, just David's age, is also on the *Morrissey* this year too. The two boys should have the time of their lives.

G. P. Putnam's Sons, Publishers, New York

PUTNAM'S BOYS' BOOKS BY BOYS

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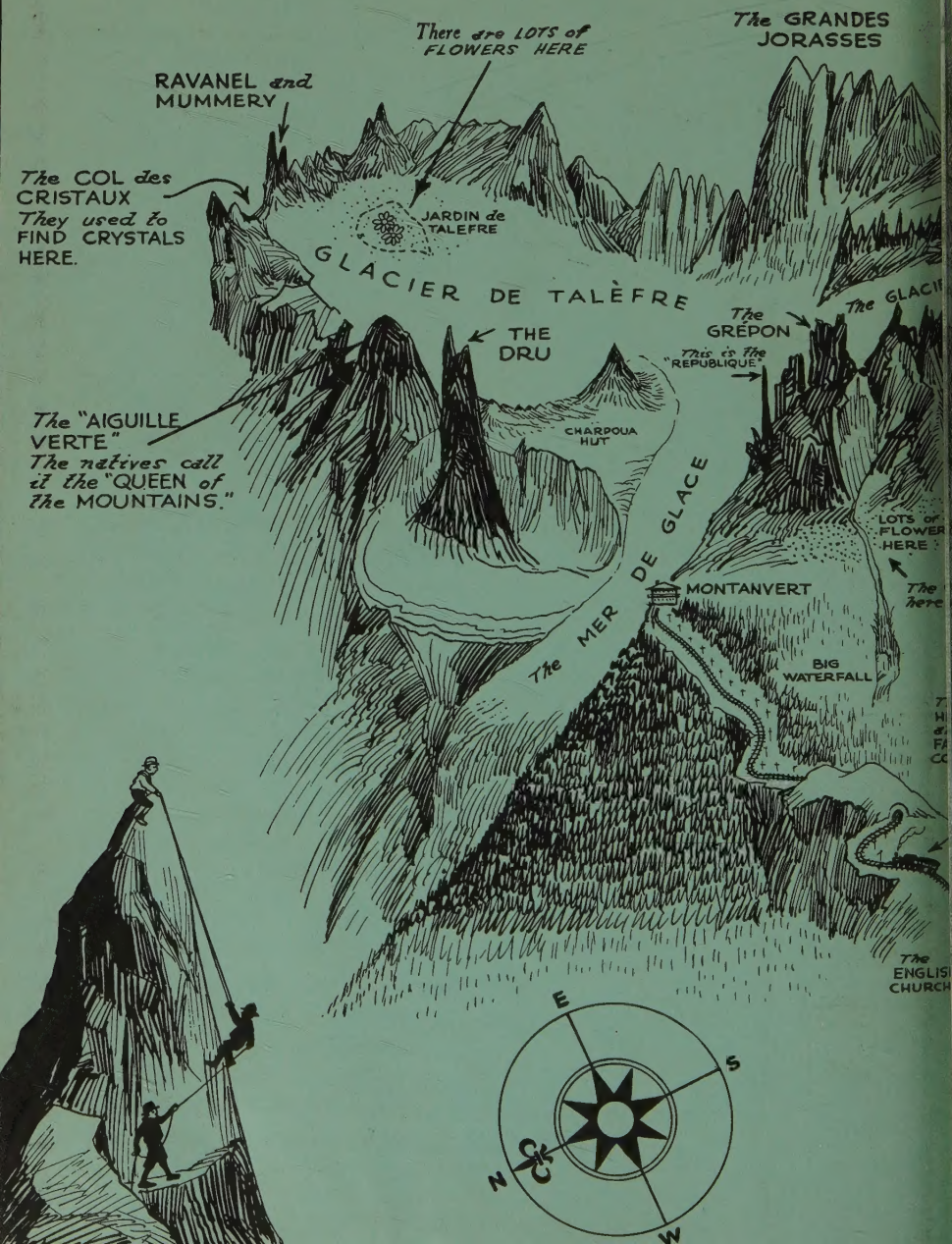
This is Bob's journal, as he kept it on the trip made with his father into the little traveled bush of Northern Ontario, back-packing, sledding, canoeing. Often it was written beside the campfire or with his blanket tucked around him in some cabin or tepee. A straightforward, simple record of an eleven-year-old boy's impressions and reactions on a journey which would delight 'most any youngster or grown-up. Price, \$1.75.

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*The COL des CRISTAUX
They used to
FIND CRYSTALS
HERE.*

*RAVEL and
MUMERY*

*There are LOTS of
FLOWERS HERE*

*The GRANDES
JORASSES*

GLACIER DE TALÈFRE

*JARDIN de
TALEFRE*

THE DRU

*CHARDOUA
HUT*

The GRÉPON

*This is the
"REPUBLIQUE"*

*The "AIGUILLE
VERTE"
The natives call
it the "QUEEN of
the MOUNTAINS."*

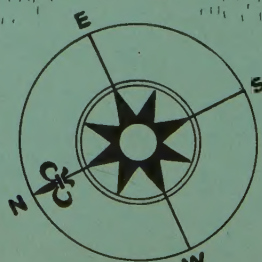
The MER DE GLACE

MONTANVERT

*BIG
WATERFALL*

*LOTS of
FLOWER
HERE*

*The
ENGLISH
CHURCH*



GIANT'S
DTH

MONT
MAUDIT

THE CAMEL'S HUMPS

The VALLOT REFUGE

MONT BLANC
DU TACUL

DOMÉ
DU GÔUTER

COL DU GÉANT

NT is BEHIND
this RIDGE

AIGUILLE DU GOUT

The JUNCTION

GLACIER
DU
TACONNAZ

WE SAW SHEEP
HERE

GLACIER
DES
BOSSONS

HERE are
the "PYRAMIDS"

TWO WOODS
KEES STOP
B WATER
ZLS' TOO
IN 70 LIVE

ENGINEERING

MONITORING

WHERE WE STAYED

AERIAL R.R.
STATION

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